RUMMYNISCENCES

FREDERICK P. KAFKA

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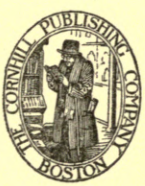
By
FREDERICK P. KAFKA
With Illustrations by Walt Lantz



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Dedicated

TO MY FRIENDS

and all the other "regular fellows" who erstwhile spread joviality and cheer throughout this now arid land.

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RUMMYNISCENCES

Of the days of conviviality, good-fellowship and liquid cheer, — of the days when warm friendships were cemented among genial companions, whose gambols banished care, brightened life, and made reminiscence a delight.

CONTENTS

PAGE

FOREWORD xi

ACE HIGH! 3

Wherein is related how the Duke, after rusticating to recuperate his nerves, started to roll and hit the high spots on all six.

"HANDS UP!" 23

A crime wave, a series of hold-ups, a sequence of drinks, and — the denouement!

"STUPID" AND THE GOATS 33

In which the "Goat" butts his persecutors and sheds his horns.

THE WORM THAT TURNED 49

Wherein Clabby makes a suggestion which is promptly acted upon, much to his subsequent amazement and disgust.

A ROLL THROUGH A NIGHT 55

The log of a bibulous Odyssey — and what befell.

WESTERN UNION NO. 2074 77

The tale of how a stormy night and a Wall Street leak culminated in "the Widdy O'Kane's mirricle."

VERY GOOD, EDDIE! 91

In which Finkel makes a "little mistake" and Eddie acquires a fine hang-over and a new job.

PAGE

'Twixt Two and Dawn 103

Being the tale of two belated prowlers, a can of milk and a cluster of sandwiches and hoboes.

The Stoic Takes the Count 117

In which philosophy is floored by a combination of humidity, corpulency and "general cussedness."

The Misogamist. 125

Wherein is chronicled how Joe's studies in juvenile psychology resulted in a complete transformation in his personal appearance, his philosophy and his marital views.

The Tale of the Patch 147

Setting forth how Buck and the Shrimp took their "hang-overs" out for an airing, and how Buck became possessed of the patch and his discomfiture thereat.

April Showers! 155

Which is not a meteorological discourse, but a recital of Dame Fortune's fickle treatment of "The Revere Sisters."

FOREWORD

January 16th, 1920. — Who, that ever loved good cheer, will forget this date? — The date that marked the demise of the jolly reign of King Alcohol and the termination of his era of good fellowship!

On that night, — the last on which the serving of spirituous beverages was permissible in the clubs, cafes, and all the other haunts of congenial souls, — on that night, sorrowful millions celebrated feverishly throughout the land, and toasted the glorious days that, on the stroke of midnight, were doomed to become a memory.

The circle of regulars that attended this final session of the Sun Dodgers, in the tap-room of one of our metropolitan clubs, sipped their high-balls soberly and debated the future solemnly. Even Dennis, — Dennis of the stolid visage and the flat pedals, — carefully balancing his tray-full of exhilarators and bracers, pussy-footed about with a funereal expression as he officiated at the obsequies of his heretofore generous lord and master, John Barleycorn.

"What's to become of all the old familiar types, — the popular good-fellow, the ubiquitous man-about-town, the East Side's 'regular guy,' the cabaret hounds,

the stage-door Johnnies, the spaghetti twirlers, the chop suey fiends, and all the other characters that made up the maelstrom of the Great White Way?" wailed the Shrimp.

"How's a fellow ever going to get to know another fellow well enough to call him by his first name, without liquor?" queried Buck.

"Where'll the boss take his stenog., and how will the married men manage to get away with it hereafter?" asked the Duke.

"And the married women, as well!" added the Misogamist.

"Who's going to listen to anyone's troubles, without mahogany and brass rail environment?" demanded Cliff.

"What'll become of the poison ivy quartets, the whiskey tenors, and the hop-sodden bassos? Who's going to sing at all, outside of the churches?" added 'Stupe' Crosby.

"Who'll coin new stories, or resurrect the old ones? Who'll bet or buy, frolic or fight, gamble — or gambol, or start or finish anything whatever?" growled Eddie.

"Oh, cheer up, fellows! The old sun will surely dissipate the clouds again," commented the placid Misogamist. "We'll have to find new diversions, — and we will. We're all in the same boat and with

plenty of company, too, if that's any consolation. And they certainly can't take this from us. Even though we never drank another drop, we'd still have star averages — three and five star, mostly.

We've all been through the mill, too, and we've lived — lived and laughed and made merry as coming generations never will. We've had our fling, and now for the simple life, the old log fire and the favorite old briar or calabash, while you sip a little of the old Scotch you've stored away and in revery live over again the jovial evenings and jolly adventures, henceforth, but memories."

"Reminiscences!" murmured the Duke, dolefully.

"Rummyniscences!" amended the Shrimp.

Whereupon they delved into the past, banished gloom and kept Dennis busy until well into the dawn as they recalled many a prank and escapade.

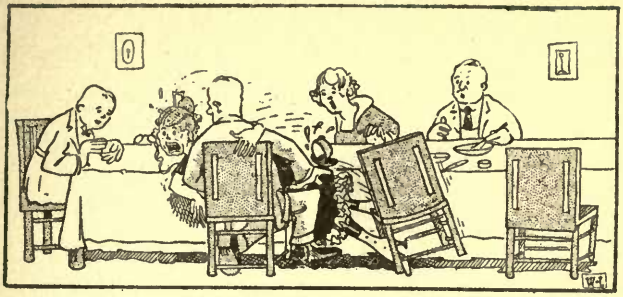
Here, for the delectation of others of their ilk, who likewise have lived, and for the edification of the coming generation, which will journey through life more sedately and certainly more soberly, are transcribed some of the 'rummyniscences' related on that memorable night. 'Rummyniscences' — not of roystering and drunken orgies, but rather tales that depict the roseate conviviality of yesterday, the spontaneous and whole-souled wit and humor, the generous impulses and the

warm comradeships, which engendered geniality, sentiment, and love of fellowman, and helped to banish the dull, grey periods.

May their perusal serve to recall similar escapades and elicit an occasional reminiscent smile!

ACE HIGH!

Wherein is related how the Duke, after rusticating to recuperate his nerves, started to roll and hit the high spots on all six.



Ace High!

I.

THE Sun-Dodgers were in the midst of a hilarious session. The drinks had just been pinned on the Shrimp, who good-naturedly submitted to the panning that followed his inadvertent disclosure of the sequel to a little episode of the night before. Presently the Duke came to his rescue.

"The worst 'bone' I ever pulled," he drawled, "was up in the White Mountains, during —"

But let us interrupt him. Those of our readers who are not thoroughly versed in the slang of the Metropolis, may require elucidation.

A "bone" then, in base-ball parlance, signifies a bone-head play. You don't quite get me yet? Well then, in refined palaver, a "bone" is a faux pas. Vous comprenez, maintenant, n'est ce pas? Bien! Well then, let's go — or rather, — let us interrupt further.

Surely you know the Duke, or at any rate, his type. Well-groomed, faultlessly tailored, debonnair, and full of assurance. Not precisely good-looking, but invariably looks good. Twinkling eyes, a humorous mouth, and a personality oozing conviviality and good-nature. Wonderful raconteur and entertainer. Bank-roll, — but no bank account. Long on wit and wits. You know him! Of course! Every one does.

And now that you and the Duke are on speaking terms, we'll permit him to continue his tale.

"The worst 'bone' I ever pulled," proceeded the Duke, "was up in the White Mountains, during the fall that I was rusticating there, recuperating from a regular series of orgies.

Swell hotel, but absolutely dead. Only a sprinkling of guests. Fine collection of proper and solemn antiques of both sexes, who lolled about in rockers and steamer rugs, and hit the quilts by nine. Nothing stirring but the leaves. Nothing wild but the flowers. Right you are, Shrimp, you said it! I was a square peg in a round hole, sure enough, but it was just what my frazzled nerves needed.

I made no acquaintances. It wasn't being done. So I just moped around and 'cured' by myself, like the rest, till one evening the old lady who sat on my left at dinner, tripped as she got up from the table, and

spilled herself, her decorum, and my coffee, all plumb into my lap.

Great embarrassment and profuse apologies on her part. Chesterfieldian deprecation on mine. And thus began our acquaintance.

Fine, quaint old lady. Plainly but primly attired in black silk. Nice gray hair, kindly eyes. I lost a mother like that many years ago, and it afforded me pleasure to be gallant to the dear old soul, and to brighten her lonesome sojourn amid the depressing atmosphere of the now practically forsaken hotel.

So I lent her my arm as we promenaded the spacious verandahs, and tucked her snugly into her rugs and shawls in her favorite arm-chair, during the rest periods, the while we decorously discussed Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Christian Science, Suffrage and kindred exciting themes.

And as we gradually exhausted conventional topics and indulged in a little harmless scandal-mongering, the dear old lady proved quite entertaining and related some really droll anecdotes, replete with quaint, refined humor.

She laughed heartily, too, at the tales I reeled off to her, especially those I spun at my own expense.

In short, we were getting on famously, and enjoyed ourselves, much to the obvious envy of the other guests, who surveyed us crabbedly and with supercilious aloofness.

One evening as the twilight was falling and the air grew chill I fell to coughing slightly, whereat my companion solicitously insisted that I wear my heavy coat and otherwise proceeded to mother me.

I politely turned down her suggestions of hot flannels and mustard plasters.

"I'll kill that little cough in a jiffy," I replied. "I'll prescribe myself a remedy that is better adapted to the cravings of my disreputable constitution and soul. Dinner won't be ready for half an hour, and if you'll pardon me till then, I'll go to my room and mix myself a brace of stiff cocktails. These, and a hot rum toddy before going to bed, and I'll feel 'one hundred percent' in the morning."

Her eyes twinkled and her lips curled slightly under a suppressed smile.

"I've been coughing a bit myself," she vouchsafed.

"You don't say so!" I exclaimed. "Better let me prescribe for your cold, too. I'll be back in two shakes of a — mixer."

With that, I dashed up-stairs to my room, mixed a tasty Bronx which I poured into my thermos-bottle and returned to the porch.

"I've brought the medicine," I announced solemnly.

"Thank you, doctor," she answered decorously.

Finally came the eve of our parting.

"I leave early tomorrow morning," she informed me. "A letter I received to-day, makes it necessary for me to return home at once, so I'll bid you Good-bye now and express to you my sincere thanks and appreciation of your many courtesies."

"Nothing doing," I interrupted. "You can't leave me flat like that. I'll see you off to the station in the morning."

"Oh, that's very kind of you, but really you can't!" she protested. "I'm leaving on the seven-thirty, and will have to breakfast before seven. You've been altogether too kind as it is, and —"

"Well, I'm going to be on deck," I insisted. "Many's the morning I've arisen before dawn to go fishing or shooting, or some such stunt, and I'm not going to let a few extra winks cheat me out of properly seeing off my only friend in these dreary wilds!"

I made good in the morning, too, and was on hand bright and early. Her eyes fairly shone and her appreciation and gratitude were well worth hours of lazy slumber. Presently the stage pulled up and we were off for the station.

"You've been extremely kind, Mr. Barlow, and have made very delightful and enjoyable a stay that would otherwise have been most monotonous. I appreciate your kindness and courtesy much more than I can

say," said my companion, with much more of the same, all of which I, of course, deprecated.

"I'll venture to ask you a little final favor," she concluded. "I should regret to have our acquaintance terminate here. Will you, after your return to New York, afford me the pleasure of your society at dinner some evening?"

"I'd be delighted," I replied heartily, and complied with her request for my address and telephone number.

II.

Months rolled by. I was back in the big burg, hitting the high spots again, when one evening I was called to the 'phone in my bachelor apartment.

"Hello!" answered I. "Hello, Mr. Barlow," came the response. "So glad to hear your voice again!" It was my acquaintance of the White Mountains, Mrs. —well, Mrs. Hart. Her real name doesn't matter.

"I 'phoned to remind you of your promise to dine with me. Does it still hold good?" she continued.

I had many engagements on my slate, but a gentleman's word is his bond. (Oh, well, have it your way, Shrimp! I wont stop to argue the point.) Well, to get back to my 'phone call.

"Most certainly," I replied. "I'd be delighted. Name the evening."

"Oh, thank you! Could you come tomorrow night? I'm particularly anxious to have you tomorrow, if you can possibly come." Which meant that I'd have to pass up a perfectly easy poker game, but it was evident that the old lady's heart was set on it, and the game was scratched then and there.

"Surely," I replied, "I'll be on deck tomorrow night. What time?"

I could hear her chuckle. "Why, you don't even know where I live! And when I tell you, you wont be so ready to come."

Visions of the Bronx, Hoboken and far-off Canarsie flitted through my mind, but I was game.

"I'll show up all right! Where *do* you live?" I inquired.

"South Bethlehem, Pa.," said she, laughing audibly. "I'm 'phoning you from there. And now, I suppose I'll have to let you beg off and be horribly disappointed."

Well, that was a bit rough. I was somewhat groggy, but still game. I didn't beg off. On the contrary.

"You're a regular dear," she concluded, "and, oh, I quite forgot. Won't you bring your evening clothes? Good-bye! I'll be delighted to see you again."

III.

"Well, next morning I started for Jersey City to take the Black Diamond Express for South Bethlehem, about as enthusiastic as a sophomore on his way to chapel.

At the train gate, a colored functionary in livery, scrutinized the passengers closely.

"Are you Mr. Barlow, Suh?" he inquired, as I passed through. "This way, Suh!" and relieving me of my bag, he led me, while I followed somewhat dazed, aboard a luxurious private car. Not a soul in it, but I and my guide, who now, all grins and smirks, became my zealous attendant. He divested me of my coat and hat, ensconced me in a comfortable arm chair, placed a small mahogany table alongside, deposited thereon a bottle of Scotch and another of Rye, a high-ball glass, some ice, and a bottle of White Rock.

Then he departed and returned with a box of choice perfectos, which he likewise deposited before me, to all of which I submitted quite passively. I can't be riled in that way.

"Would you like a magazine or the morning paper, suh? Or would you prefer a book from the library?" he inquired.

"Explain, you ebony-hued minion of luxury!" I commanded. "Explain, before you proceed with

your nefarious temptations! Why am I thus Shanghaied, and confined in solitary grandeur?"

"Mrs. Hart's orders, suh! This is her private car. I'm to look after you, suh! Anything else, suh? Jess you push dat button, if you wants Henry, suh — That's me!" and he departed for the reading matter, grinning most affably.

The train pulled out. I lit a cigar, sipped some Scotch, and ruminated. I've received many a jolt in my peregrinations through this topsy-turvy world, but this was a knock-out. I couldn't hook up my quaint motherly old acquaintance of the White Mountains with all this lavishness.

"Henry," I exploded, "who in the name of the Saints or the devil is Mrs. Hart, anyway?"

"Lawd, suh!" replied Henry, aghast, "Mrs. Hart, suh? Why, Mrs. Hart she done own this road, or at least de big slice what Mr. Hart left her when he died. She's de richest and bestest old lady in Pennsylvany, suh! Surely, you knows her, suh! She done describe you puffeckly! 'Watch out foh a thin gen'leman with funny eyes, not much hair, a reddish nose and crooked legs, and take good care of Mr. Barlow, Henry,' she said. I spotted you at once, suh! Surely, you know Mrs. Hart, suh!"

"Oh, yes, quite well, but — well, never mind.

That's all, Henry," I replied and Henry ambled away while I proceeded to indulge in some more ruminating.

Some twenty miles of landscape reeled by as I sipped my Scotch reflectively, but this solitary luxury wasn't exactly my speed.

After the third high-ball, I arose, left the car and wandered through the Plebeian Pullmans, seeking diversion.

And whom should I spot in one of them but Windy Tom Tupper and that other big noise, Sol. Bamberg. A made-to-order opportunity to boost my stock and secure some free advertising, so I greeted them and presently invited them into my car.

"What's the matter with this one?" demanded Tom.

"More privacy in mine," I replied.

"But we paid for these seats and should use them," remonstrated Sol.

However, I persisted, and inveigled them into my car, whereupon Henry immediately got busy and plied them with liquor and cigars, as they sat speechless and open-mouthed. I sure knocked them dead.

"Well, I'll be dashed!" gasped Tom, recovering the use of his tongue. "Whose layout is this, anyhow?" — addressing himself to Henry.

"Mr. Barlow's car, suh!" replied that discreet and expert tip-extractor. "Shall I pour you some more

Scotch, suh? Does you gen'lemen prefer some other brand of cigars? This is Mr. Barlow's private brand!" Say, boys, I could have embraced that dusky son of Ham then and there.

"Do you always travel like this, Barlow — er, Mr. Barlow?" gasped Sol., thoroughly awed and "mistering" me for the first time.

"Generally," I answered, "unless the distance is short. The multiplicity and importance of my interests require much deliberation and privacy, except when I permit myself to play a little, with good fellows, like yourselves."

Well, I kept it up, by the grace of God and Henry, till they reached their destination and got off, properly and thoroughly impressed, primed to circulate the most glowing accounts of my consequence and lavishness, and I chuckled over their gullibility until we pulled into South Bethlehem.

IV.

Here Henry was relieved by a colleague, who led me to a waiting limousine, bundled me inside with my grip, and climbed up alongside the chauffeur.

We rolled along for quite a distance, out to what was evidently the exclusive residential section, and eventually pulled up under the portico of a fine old colonial mansion.

A consequential butler divested me of my coat and deferentially led me into the reception room, where I let myself into an arm chair and waited, — somewhat uncomfortably, I confess.

Presently Mrs. Hart entered, and all restraint and embarrassment promptly disappeared. She was the same kind, motherly old soul I had met at the "antique" resort in the Mountains. Her warm and sincere greeting put me at ease at once.

"A fine surprise to spring on an unsuspecting victim and friend!" I chided, after our preliminary greetings and a nice little chat.

"Nothing at all compared to the many courtesies you showed to a solitary old lady, who will never be able to fully repay them," she replied, smiling warmly, "Besides, I am celebrating my seventieth birthday today, with a little dinner party to which I have invited only close relatives and very dear friends, and I wanted you to make my little party complete."

Let me epitomize what followed. After an hour's chat I was ushered up to the room assigned to me, Found my grip had been unpacked, my dress clothes pressed and laid out on the bed.

I dolled up and came down. Found some guests had already arrived. Flock of limousines outside. Others kept rolling up and discharging their occupants.

My hostess introduced me. Senator Blank, Congressman So-and-So, General This or That, steel magnates, coal barons, railroad potentates, — all big leaguers, and their ladies — and plain me.

Eventually we filed in to dinner, or rather — the banquet; and then, to my further surprise, I found myself seated on Mrs. Hart's right, near the head of the table.

Well, I won't bore you with a description of the banquet. The old lady was ceremoniously congratulated, and duly toasted and fussed over. But with all this she managed to devote much time to me, and enhanced my standing among all these notables by acclaiming me as a most highly esteemed friend.

Finally the ladies withdrew, and the party began to really liquor and smoke up. As the bubbles functioned and the alcohol began to dissolve their veneer and reserve, those big bugs turned out to be regular human beings, and believe me, boys, they could step some, too!

I began to hit on all six myself, and convulsed that bunch with my best stories. Whether I rose to their level or they descended to mine, the fact remains that those moguls were "old-topping" me and clinking their glasses with mine, and the more we clinked the more we all blinked, and skidded.

Those who had brought their ladies had by this time departed with them or sent them home.

At one stage I was doing some close harmony, off in a corner, with a congressman and two multi-millionaires, our arms about each other's shoulders, killing "The old oaken bucket that hung in the well," "The old family tooth-brush that hung o'er the sink," "Old Dutch," "Paddy Duffy's Cart" and — well, all of them — the very same ones we massacre when we're blowing out the lights. By that time I was doing the Sousa act, leading the choir, and being addressed as "Chief" by the few who didn't feel they knew me intimately enough to call me Bob.

Well, curtains! Modesty, and regard for the prominence of my fellow revellers, forbid further details.

In the morning I breakfasted with my hostess, feeling none too chipper. The coffee, and later on, a drive with her through the bracing ozone, helped me a lot, though.

She was a brick, a regular thoroughbred. I was a little off my feed and felt a bit guilty, and I guess she knew all about that, for she remarked:

"I'm so glad you enjoyed my dinner party. Judging from the casualties as reported to me by Jennings, my butler, it was a success. The singing was quite wonderful. I lay in bed enjoying it till I fell into a

heavy sleep, for I was quite exhausted. You are gifted with quite a tenor voice, Mr. Barlow, and really, I had no idea my friends could sing so — well, with such fullness of spirit. I'm so glad you came! I just knew you would be the life of the party! I couldn't hear the stories," she added, "although I heard the peals of laughter that greeted them. They must have been very amusing. Won't you tell me some of them?"

And her eyes twinkled as I hastily averred my inability to recall them.

The arrival of the minister saved me from further embarrassment. He was her son-in-law and the shepherd of the most exclusive and pretentious church in the town. He had been seated opposite me at dinner the night before and had studied me persistently and solemnly, somewhat to my discomfort. Fortunately he had withdrawn with the ladies.

My hostess attended to some household matters, leaving me to the Dominie. In the course of our conversation, he presently remarked:

"Mrs. Hart is certainly quite infatuated with you, Mr. Barlow. I have never known her to exhibit such an interest in anyone. She is really very reserved. I am her relative by marriage, — her daughter's husband, you know, and yet, she has never encouraged intimacy on my part. I have failed utterly to interest her in my

work and my church, or in securing any contribution whatever from her. As I understand it, your acquaintance with her is quite recent and came about quite casually, and yet, she evidently esteems you more than she does her immediate relatives and friends of long standing. I understand she has placed her private car at your disposal. I have never even entered it. I cannot comprehend it!"

Well, I couldn't enlighten him either, and didn't attempt to.

The Duke paused to re-light his cigar, puffed at it meditatively, and continued:

"But I'd better wind up my tale! That same afternoon I bade Mrs. Hart adieu, and journeyed back to New York, in the same private car, with Henry, and all the liquid and other comforts he could provide.

As I stepped off the luxurious car and into the foul smelling and tobacco reeking men's cabin of the ferry boat, 'mid a down-pouring, dampening and depressing rain, I figuratively came to earth again, on the broad expanse of the Hudson. 'Back to the mine!' I soliloquized, — but fellows, they can't take one thing from me — for two days, I lived — Ace high . . !"

The Duke drained his glass and fell back into his chair, his eyes narrowed in retrospection.

Presently he delved into his breast pocket, produced

his wallet, and extracted therefrom a well-worn newspaper clipping.

"A month or two after this episode," he drawled, "I happened to lamp this article in a newspaper. I'll just read you the head-lines:

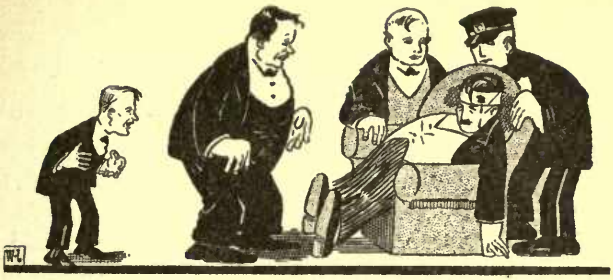
PENNSYLVANIA SOCIAL
CIRCLES SHOCKED

Court appoints trustee to administer affairs of wealthy and philanthropic widow.

Legally declared incompetent and mentally deranged.

"HANDS UP!"

A crime wave, a series of hold-ups, a sequence of drinks, and — the denouement!



"Hands Up!"

I.

BUD Barrows tipped the scales around two hundred — six feet, one inch, of solid bone and muscle. Likewise he drank, — hard liquor, — all the fifty-seven varieties and concoctions thereof, and he met all comers, — his friends, their friends, anybody's friends, — and eventually, on his way homeward, the weary-eyed wops going to work at day-break.

All of which is to say that he was a "good fellow," "a regular guy" and a "sticker." Also it was his confirmed habit, whether plumb sober or genteely skished, — for Bud averred that no gentleman ever got really drunk, — not so long as he refrained from whispering to side-walks, — it was his confirmed habit upon ascending the brown-stone steps of the paternal domicile, to noiselessly open and carefully lock the front door behind him and then, after removing his shoes in the hall-way, to pussyfoot into the parlor and to equally

carefully secure and lock the window-catches against possible burglarous intrusion, — this at the behest of his most estimable but extremely nervous mater.

Be it also set down for your edification that Bud resided on a very steep street, on Washington Heights, — a street paved, because of its steep grade, with rough stone blocks instead of the customary smooth asphalt.

The relevancy of all of which seemingly incongruous statements may presently become more apparent.

II.

It is not restful or soothing to shattered nerves, to live on a steep street paved with stone blocks, be the nerves a mere fashionable ailment, as in the case of his mother, or real "Honest-to-God" jumpy nerves of the "morning-after" variety.

The heavily-laden motor trucks, rumbling down or laboring up such a street, shake the houses to their very foundations and cause them to quiver from cellar to roof. Everything that is not riveted down seems to do a shimmy, — the table-ware, the light ornaments on the mantle, and the contents of the side-board as well.

The water in the glasses, the soup in the tureen, — the coffee, and even the mustard and catsup, all quiver and quake in trepidation. But the trucks roll by, the windows cease rattling and the houses still stand, ap-

parently — apparently, mark ye — uninjured, and mater and the whole blooming family look relieved, the nerves cease to flutter and the meal proceeds.

III.

But to return to Bud. On this 'particular night things had been very hilarious at the club, until old Bramwell was brought in from a taxi, staggering and supported by a policeman, — a big gash on his forehead, and his collar and dress-shirt smeared with blood. He had been blackjacked and robbed by thugs in a side-street on his way to the club after the opera. Another member had been similarly assaulted and robbed only a few days previously. The papers were full of accounts of hold-ups and robberies. A veritable crime-wave had seized the metropolis and the police seemed powerless.

Bramwell's plight sobered his club-mates. They sat around gloomily and recalled a long series of similar crimes. It got on Bud's nerves presently. We have already informed you that big and strong as he was, he had "nerves" — susceptible nerves.

He was sorry for old "Brammy," of course, but he couldn't see much sense in sitting around glum and gloomy and listening to blood-curdling, creepy recitals that gave one the "Willies."

It didn't seem to mix with the liquor somehow, — in fact the drinks began to come slowly, — too slowly for Bud. He found himself ordering two rounds in succession, while the others were listening wide-eyed and aghast — so he left.

He drifted around to Clabby's, but found no one there whom he knew. As he sipped a high-ball, Clabby sociably engaged him in conversation and presently, having exhausted the day's sporting topics, Clabby too began to comment on the numerous hold-ups that seemed to infest the community. Bud downed his high-ball, glared irately at well-meaning, bewildered Clabby and left abruptly.

In Wallick's he picked up "Dink" Van Loan, and they licked up a couple of more high-balls and proceeded down the line. He didn't care much for Dink, but at least Dink's conversation, while shallow and boresome, was not centered on hold-ups. He didn't mention crime but prated volubly about his feminine conquests.

Bud stuck with him till early morn, drinking almost feverishly. He was sore on himself.

Finally, he hailed a taxi and after dropping Dink at his house, he proceeded to roll home, much the worse for all the liquor he had imbibed, — in fact his eyes didn't seem to focus, and he began to do mental sums

in simple arithmetic, — a habit of his, to maintain his grip on his senses, when he felt himself skidding. And then he dozed off, only to be awakened by the squeaking of brakes, the sudden stopping of his taxi — and revolver shots —!

A policeman pulled open the door of his taxi and piled in without ceremony. Another clambored alongside the chauffeur. The taxi whirled up Broadway at breakneck speed, slewed around into a side-street, narrowly missing a milk-wagon, then tore up Riverside Drive.

"What-the-h—l!" ejaculated Bud.

"Sit still!" commanded the officer. "Hold-up! Gun-men! Making a get-away in that big touring-car ahead! Sorry to inconvenience you, but this taxi just rolled along in time. D—n 'em! They're pulling away from us!" And just then the officer in front levelled his gun at the fleet touring-car and pumped several shots at the rear tires. But they got away and the officers presently released Bud's taxi, cursing its lack of speed.

Bud dismissed it at his street and slipped into the corner cafe through the side-door. He seated himself at a table in the rear-room, downed a big hooker of whiskey and ordered another. He needed them. His nerves were shot.

IV.

Finally, he staggered home, up the front steps, unlocked the door and entered none too steadily. No need of his customary stealth and avoidance of all noises. The family was out of town.

He entered the parlor, swaying unsteadily, to secure the windows, his invariable custom, as we have already set forth. A small rug slid on the polished floor under his uncertain step. His legs shot from under him and clutching wildly at the darkness, he fell heavily and measured his length on the floor. As he scrambled clumsily to his feet, there was a loud report — he received a violent, stunning blow on his head and sank to his knees — petrified. Then — silence. . . . His brain reeled. For some seconds he remained crouched in terrified expectancy. Gradually his mind cleared. Burglars! Desperate murderous assassins! The darkness and suspense were maddening. Why didn't they finish him? Or did they perhaps believe that they had done so . . . and fled!

He edged over to the wall and pressed the button of the electric switch. No lights! They had cut the wires, he divined. Thorough desperate marauders. Something dropped onto the floor. Ha! They were still in the room! Terrified and in desperation, he bolted through the darkness and out of the room, down

the hall, and into the basement — he was sure he was being pursued . . .

Feverishly he unlocked the basement door, raised the latch of the area-gate and fled out into the street. He sped towards Broadway shouting "Police!" as he ran.

Some late prowlers took up the cry and the police presently came on the run — two of them. They rushed back with him to the house and up the front steps. He unlocked the door and they entered cautiously with drawn revolvers in hand, — Bud bringing up the rear — his nerves palpitating like trip-hammers.

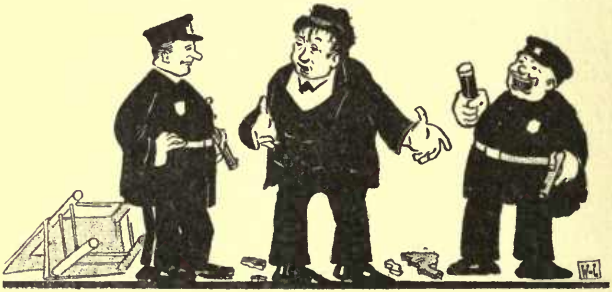
Silence reigned supreme. One of the officers pulled out a pocket search-light and flashed it around the room . . . amazed, stupefied by the spectacle it revealed, they stood rooted in their tracks. A film of white dust covered the mantle, the bric-a-brac, the rugs — everything. Chunks of plaster littered the floor. An irregular, jagged aperture in the ceiling and the grinning rows of bared wood-lath behind it, gaped at them fantastically. A dangling, torn wire accounted for the electric-light switch's failure to function.

The officer nudged his fellow, pointed his extended finger to the region of his own brain or to what served in lieu thereof, rotated his finger slowly and signifi-

cantly, and glaring at Bud in supreme disgust, ejaculated:

"Come along, Dinny. This nut's looking for plasterers, not police!"

"H—l!" muttered Bud, sheepishly. And, picking up his battered derby-hat, he proceeded up to his room — sober!



"STUPID" AND THE GOATS

In which the "Goat" butts his persecutors and sheds his horns.

"Stupid" and the Goats.

I.

THE circle of regulars that attended this particular session of the "Bible Class" which congregated in the club tap-room every Sunday morning for the pious purpose of imbibing their customary eye-openers and bracers were busily engaged in their favorite diversion of collectively riding one of their number rough-shod.

Just now, Buck was "it," and even solemn and sedate old Dennis, the waiter, grinned broadly, as Buck broke under the barrage of banter hurled at him.

The room resounded with mirth as Cliff joined the circle.

"'Ello, everybody! What's the row?" greeted Cliff, "What's doing?"

"Oh, Buck's delivering a dissertation on big game-hunting again. Been dragging us through the Cana-

dian Rockies, killing Moose and Caribou, and all the other varieties of goats whose heads adorn grills and libraries," nagged the Shrimp.

"Goats, nothing!" growled Buck, resentfully. "At any rate not the human and Harlem species that you have been reared with. And at that, let me tell you, there are some goats in the Rockies that are well worth hunting. But what's the use? Can't expect a bunch of city reared fashionplates to appreciate the joys of the chase. Can't expect it from rum-hounds who follow only the trails that lead from one cafe to another and whose outdoor activities are limited to golf and flounder-fishing!"

"You've never, any one of you, experienced a real thrill, barring those you feel when somebody buys. I'm shut!"

"Oh, I don't know!" persisted the Shrimp, "for real thrills caviar hunting in the Vodka swamps of Russia has it on goat shooting a dozen ways! You start out before dawn with a Mujik guide, and a flobert rifle, and a brace of truffle hounds and —"

"Oh, chop it!" roard Buck. "I'll buy! Anything to stop your paretic chatter. More liquor, Dennis, for the Comedy Kid and the rest of the minstrels!"

"What do you fellows make of the deal 'Stupe' Crosby handed us last night?" interposed Cliff, tact-

fully shifting the subject. "Pretty rough stuff among friends! I'm off of him for good, believe me!"

Noting the blank and inquiring looks that greeted his announcement, he continued, "Why! Hasn't the Shrimp told you?"

"Aw, tell them yourself!" replied the latter, sulkily. "I'm for forgetting that sketch."

Nevertheless, after some urging, the Shrimp recounted the episode.

II.

"Well," proceeded the Shrimp, "after dinner last night, 'Stupe' got a phone call and started to make a quick get-away, but we kept liquoring him up and kidding him out of leaving. Finally he said, 'Boys, you've got me all wrong! It isn't a case of skirt at all! Nothin' of the sort. The fact is I'm going to flag this congenial bunch for a vulgar and brutal cock-fight. If you think I'm stalling, why come along, any or all of you, but make up your minds quickly. I'm late now, as it is.' "

"Where's it coming off?" asks Bud Barrows, strong for any kind of scrap, as usual.

"Out in Flushing," says old 'Stupid.' "Come along Bud. You'll meet a good bunch and double your roll. I'm in right!"

"Too far! Case of all night!" answers Bud reluctantly.

"Make it inside of an hour. Got to!" coaxes 'Stupid.'

"Never saw a cock-fight! Must be good fun," murmured the Duke.

"Never saw one myself!" added Cliff. "Don't think I'd care for it, but I'd go just to complete my sporting education, — that is, if it were pulled off around these diggings, but Flushing, — Good Night!"

"I'll go, if you go!" said I.

"Let's all go!" said Bud and the Duke simultaneously.

"Come along!" says 'Stupid.' "Shoot you out in a taxi in an hour, and slip you the dope so you'll all clean up! Plenty to drink and a good bunch. Come along!"

"Well," continued the Shrimp, after a pause. "We fell! Corralled a taxi, and piled inside. The five of us. Some cold night and some cold ride! Travelling ice-box!

"The ruts in the road were frozen into solid ridges and we hurtled around inside from one lap to another like dice in a box. Took us two solid hours to make Flushing. Half-hour breakdown on some God-forsaken road, somewhere between New York and Mon-

tauk Point. We were a cheerful bunch of icicles when we finally made Flushing — not!"

The Shrimp paused. Cliff crumpled his paper, and shivered as with a chill, at the recollection.

"Umph!" ejaculated the Misogamist, "Flushing, eh! Towards midnight, and in a taxi, on the coldest night of the year! Say, you fellows were heading for the wrong town. You should have hit the pike for Amityville. There's a fine big asylum there for all kinds of nuts."

"Right you are, Joe!" laughed the Shrimp, but listen and get the rest of it!

Stupe halted our taxi in front of a tumble-down, dirty looking rum dispensary. We piled out, stamping our feet and swinging our arms, trying to fan up the spark of life that flickered within us.

"You wait inside," said Stupe to the chauffeur. "Here, blow this two spot for drinks and smokes while you're waiting. We'll be back inside of a couple of hours. Now then, fellows, come along! We've got to hoof it a quarter of a mile or so. Wouldn't do, you know, to drive up in a taxi. Too conspicuous!"

Well, we hoofed it, trailing along behind old Stupid. It was bitter cold and dark as pitch, but at that it was better than our cold storage taxi. We stumbled along a trolley track, through a deserted-looking stretch of

country, for a full half mile, stubbing our frozen toes against the ties and cursing ourselves for deserting the comforts of the club.

"A fine night for a murder!" growled the Duke.

"Aw,buck up!" said Bud,"it's all in the game. Cheer up! The worst is yet to come! I think this is bully!"

"I think you'd better spend two bucks and get your head examined!" retorted the Duke. "This sporting stuff is all right — to listen to in front of a log fire, with plenty of liquor and comfort. I'm about all in. Serves me right, for going on a polar expedition, with a game leg, too!" "Water on the knee, the doctor thinks," he added.

"Water on the knee!" scoffed Bud. "Say, don't worry, Duke. Nothing to it! No chance for any water to ever get into your system!"

"Melted ice from high-balls, maybe!" observed Cliff sagely, through his chattering teeth.

"Sh! Stow the argument. We're almost there. Don't talk above a whisper," commanded Stupe. "There's the place!" he continued, pointing to what appeared to be a cheerful looking road-house, some distance ahead.

"You fellows wait here while I go ahead and fix it up," commanded Stupe in a stealthy whisper. "Keep off the road and out of sight. Maybe constables or

deputies hanging around. Stay here for ten minutes. That'll give me plenty of time. Then come up one at a time, but don't follow each other too closely. Understand? You come up first, Shrimp," he says to me. "The main is being pulled off in the cellar. Walk right up into the bar-room and wait for me there. Wait ten minutes before you start, and the rest of you come following along one at a time, and keep quiet! So long, I'm off!"

III.

Well, we huddled together and waited. Wow! but it was cold. Our feet turned to ice. Finally yours truly started out for the road-house.

I entered the bar-room feeling very self-conscious, but walked right up to the bar nonchalantly, as it were, which in my case, fellows, really meant frozen stiff. I cast about for Stupe, but he wasn't in evidence, so I waited.

A portly individual, whom I rightly sized up to be the proprietor, rose from a table where he had been playing pinocle with two natives, who eyed me curiously, and waddled around behind the bar.

There was no one else in sight.

"Cold night, sir! What'll you have?" asks His Corpulency.

"A hot rum-toddy, if you have it!" I answer.

"Sure! And a good drink on a night like this! I'll have one meself!" says the proprietor.

"Have it on me!" said I, taking advantage of the opening, to get in right.

"Thanks, have a smoke!" says the big fellow, equally generous, passing over a box of road-house delights.

"What'll your friends drink?" I countered, looking over at the two natives who were gaping at me open-mouthed.

"Kind of late to be prowling about on a cold night!" observed the proprietor searchingly, I thought, after serving his friends. I merely nodded assent.

No sign of Stupid, as yet, so I ordered a second toddy, just as the Duke blew in, his nose almost blue, but his eyes fairly beaming as he spied the steaming drinks.

Then, after short intervals, Cliff and finally Bud, arrived, and we all lined up at the bar regaling ourselves with liquid warmth.

Still no sign of Stupe, and all the time I was listening for signs of life in the cellar, and wondering why others did not drift in, like ourselves. But nary another drift, not a sound from below, and not a sign of Stupe.

I began to get suspicious. So did the bunch. So did the proprietor. So did his cronies.

The proprietor leaned over the bar, looked me straight in the eye and said, "Say! What's the game? If you're cops, who are you looking for? If you're stick-up men — why, go to it! You're welcome to the cash register, but you're in the wrong alley, Brother! There's less than ten dollars in it and you can't shake me and my friends down for more'n a couple more. If that's your game, say so, and we'll shell out. Let's get it over with!"

Can you beat that! We four poor frozen simps, desperadoes! Say, we felt pretty bad, but we laughed our fool heads off and assured him that we were plain, ordinary perfectly harmless citizens.

He apologized profusely. "I'm rough and ready," he explained, "and a bit blunt spoken. Begging your pardon, gents, but you'll admit you'd be a bit suspicious yourselves if four strangers dropped into your place one by one, on a hard night like this, and they all knows each other and comes in separate, mysterious like, and keeps lookin' around. Four of you, one at a time, and no rig or nothin', and all strangers, what's friends to each other. I don't want to make no more breaks, but what or who are you looking for? I know everybody around these parts!"

Say, fellows, we were even more puzzled than he was. He seemed on the level sure enough, but I figured he might have us sized up for deputies or something, and that he might be stalling. So I told him outright that we were there to see the main, as Stupe's guests.

His eyes kept getting bigger and bigger. "Chicken fight!" he gasped, "and in my cellar, eh! Not if I knows it! Say, come with me!"

He walked over to the cellar door, opened it and switched on the light.

The cellar was littered with boxes, barrels and household truck.

"Ain't room to spit, let alone pull a main!" he chuckled. "You've been bunked. What's your friend's name? Mr. Crosby? Stupe Crosby? Don't know the gentleman, at least not as I knows of. And he hasn't been here neither, for outside of yourselves and my friends here, there hasn't been a soul around since nine o'clock. Chicken fight? Take it from me, there's no such thing being pulled around these diggings tonight. If there was, I'd be there meself!"

"Well, fellows, to cut it all short we were the maddest, sorest, sorriest bunch outside of jail. We lapped up a couple of more hot toddies to fortify us for the return trip and hiked to our taxi, which again bumped and jolted us back to the big burg. Some party!"

concluded the Shrimp, downing his high-ball and scowling his disgust as he sank back in his chair.

IV.

"That's right, fellows," added Cliff. "That's what Stupid handed us. Roughest kind of a deal. A joke's a joke but this was murder. Wonder what became of Stupe, damn him! Must have been drinking absinthe or smoking hops. He's nutty, he is. Plumb batty!"

"Letter for you, sir! Just delivered by messenger," interrupted the club clerk.

Cliff tore open the envelope, read the missive, flushed deeply and muttering a half suppressed oath crushed it in his fist.

"Wha's 'se matter, Cliff?" inquired the irrepressible Shrimp. "Has your sweetie suddenly blown cold and given you the gate?"

"No, you saphead! Read it yourself. It concerns you, too. Read it aloud!" and Cliff tossed the crumpled note over to the Shrimp.

The Shrimp read the note slowly, his voice gradually dropping to a whisper. "Dear Cliff," he read, "Come to think it over I guess that cock-fight gag I pulled on you fellows last night was rather a 'stupid' joke. 'Stupid' — that's the word! What else could you

expect Stupid to pull on you? Possibly you fellows are a bit peeved. Well, I've experienced that feeling a number of times. For two years or more I've stood for that 'stupid' stuff, ever since I was foolish and really stupid enough to tell you about that card sharp fleecing me on the steamer when I went abroad. And particularly just you four fellows who fell for my blarney last night, made a practice of, and seemed to take much delight in hailing me as 'Stupid' in private and public, anywhere and everywhere. I took my medicine, suffered in silence and never squawked. But when you pulled it at Bud's house the other night in the presence of his sisters and the other girls I determined to get back at you. There wasn't any cock-fight, was there? That phone call for me at the club last night, was an invitation from my brother-in-law who lives in Flushing to spend the night with him and Sis. I started to explain before leaving but you fellows would have it that the call came from some doll, and goaded, or perhaps, inspired, by your masterful kidding, I handed you that cock-fight yarn. Many thanks for the taxi ride and the rest of the entertainment. I certainly was escorted out to Flushing in style. By the time you poor frozen simps reached the road-house I was snugly and warmly tucked in the quilts. Well I may be 'stupid' enough to fall for a card sharp but you'll have to admit that I've

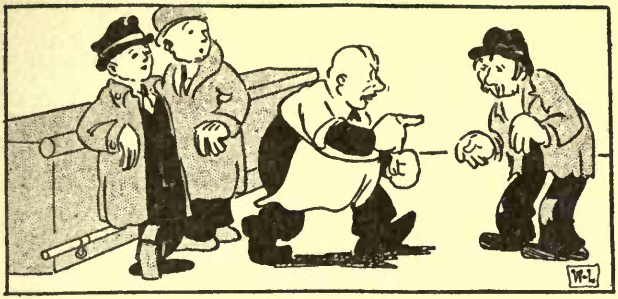
hung it on four 'pretty slick gents.' Now I've a proposition to make to you. Let's call it quits and to show that there's no hard feeling on my part I'll buy the dinners and a box at the Follies on Saturday night. I don't dare to beard you fellows much before then. Now don't be 'stupid' about it. What do you all say? Your old side-kick, Dick Crosby."

In the silence that ensued Buck quietly remarked:

"Speaking of goats again it is quite evident that these dull simple creatures are not yet entirely extinct in these parts — particularly the biped species!"

THE WORM THAT TURNED

Wherein Clabby makes a suggestion which is promptly acted upon, much to his subsequent amazement and disgust.



The Worm That Turned.

CLABBY nursed a grouch. The mirrors and the mahogany shone, the polished brasswork and the glassware glittered; everything looked bright and cheery, — but Clabby.

The trouble was trivial enough, but for the time being most trying to indolent, easy-going Clabby. One of his bartenders had quit him cold, the other was laid up sick, which meant that Clabby had to "go some" for the whole of that night, for his place was popular and much patronized.

Towards one in the morning, the worst nigh over, Clabby, practically "all in," was relieving his feelings somewhat by recounting his troubles to the Duke and Bud Barrows, who listened sympathetically over their hot scotches.

Outside the wind howled and rattled the plate glass. Zero gusts nipped the noses and ears of the belated

prowlers. Sensible people were snugly tucked in the quilts, and it was about time for Clabby to close and call it a day, or rather a night, when the door opened and a human scarecrow, thin and wan, filthy and ragged, advanced hesitatingly up to the Duke and Bud, and in a quavering, tremulous voice, begged to be staked to a drink.

"Beat it!" growled Clabby ominously.

The poor "down and outer" persisted, pleading pitiously, shaking like an aspen leaf, and muttering incoherently about the cold, sickness and hard luck.

"Shaking for a drink," growled Clabby. "Old gag! What d'ye mean, botherin' my customers? Beat it, while the beatin's good! Grease yer heels and slide!"

"Have a heart, Clabby," interrupted the Duke, "he looks as if he were dying on his feet. Fix him up with something hot."

"A drink!" quavered the derelict. "A drink! Just one drink, to w—warm me up. Need it! Honest, gents!"

Bud tossed him a quarter which he grabbed eagerly, and again resumed his pleading for a drink.

"No drink!" replied Bud. "Get yourself a bite and some coffee. Here's some more change, for a bed in a lodging house. No drink. Nothing doing. Vamoose!"

"Won't let me in no lodging houses. Got me blacklisted. J—just one drink, gents! Youse is good sports, j—just one —"

"Kin ye beat that fer nerve?" interposed Clabby, coming out from behind the bar. "Them bums is the limit. Now you beat it, and beat it quick! If ye can't get in a lodgin' house go to the police station. They'll put ye up on a night like this. Beat it now! 'Rouss! No more palaver!"

"Won't have me in de station house, either!" wailed the derelict. "Turned me away last night. Lem'me buy a drink, boss!"

Clabby's face was purple with rage. "Get out, get out, you bum! Make 'em take ye! Start somethin' — punch somebody — break a pane o'glass or somethin' and get yerself arrested! Beat it, an' beat it quick!"

And, advancing on the scarecrow, he seized him by the collar and the seat of the trousers, and with dexterity acquired in days gone by as a bouncer in a Coney Island dance hall, firmly slid him to and through the door.

"Whew!" he said, as he returned behind the bar, "can ye beat 'em? They're the limit, those bums! One er two blows in every night. I'm goin' te —"

Crash! Bang! A clatter of broken glass! A cobblestone bounced over the tile floor, and fetched up

against the rear partition. A cold draft blew through a jagged, irregular hole in the plate-glass front.

"What t'ell!" ejaculated Clabby.

He bounded out from behind the bar and followed closely by Bud and the Duke, rushed out into the street.

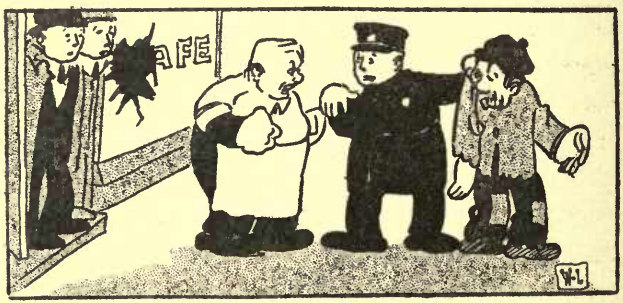
There they beheld the shivering culprit, firmly clutched by a burly bluecoat.

"Get yer coat Clabby and come along and file yer complaint with the Lootenant," commanded the officer. "I seen him smash yer glass meself. Three months on the Island for this bird!"

And as he haled his passive and unresisting captive to the station-house, the latter, leering at Clabby, muttered —

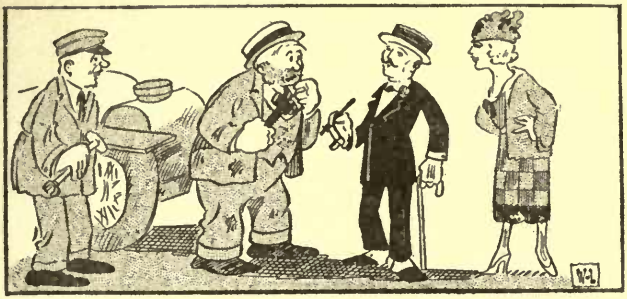
"He t — t — told me to b — b — bust a w — winder an' I t — took his advice!"

The worm had turned!



A ROLL THROUGH A NIGHT

The log of a bibulous Odyssey — and what befell.



A Roll Through A Night.

I.

A TWO days' growth of beard camouflaged Cliff's features; his shoes were spattered with mortar, and his blue serge suit was soiled with lime and plaster drippings, for he had been "on the job," inspecting one of his firm's building contracts.

Home was Cliff's one best bet and he knew it, but in the days preceding the present era of parched throats and aridness — the days when King Alcohol and his Prime Minister, John Barleycorn still held sway,— there existed many snug harbors, whose lights and attractions lured the nocturnal rovers of those days and oft delayed the passage homeward.

Cliff certainly should have kept going and made his train, but force of habit, refractory feet, and a pronounced thirst, diverted him from the homeward path; anyhow, he stopped as usual, "for just one," and now,

surrounded by his cronies, and overwhelmed by their eloquence, and a quick sequence of high-balls, he found himself in the Duke's car, alongside of Larry, the chauffeur, on the way down to Sheepshead for dinner, with the Duke and Skeets Porter and Bud Barrows and the Shrimp, seated back of him, all primed for a merry evening and a rollicking night.

II.

The merciless "kidding" that his friends subjected him to because of his bewhiskered and generally bedraggled appearance, was brought to a climax by an untoward incident that made him feel, if possible, even more self-conscious and uncomfortable.

As they rolled along the Boulevard they passed a snappy looking runabout, pulled up alongside the curb, and caught a fleeting glimpse of a very attractive little brunette, sitting on the running-board with a kit of tools spread out alongside of her, looking most woebegone and disconsolate.

Of course, they stopped and backed their car alongside.

Case of a flat shoe, and — "Such a messy job!" — "Oh, I wish I were a man! Girls are so helpless!" — "Oh, thank you so much! I really don't know how! So good of you!" — and so forth.

And Larry and Cliff piled out and jacked up the car and sweated and toiled and changed the shoe, while the others held an animated conversation with the attractive and forlorn damsel, who was now all smiles and graciousness.

Just as Cliff and Larry were finishing the job, a cutely mustached, be-spatted and immaculate fashion-plate sauntered up from a road house, where he had evidently regaled himself while Cliff and Larry toiled and inquired loftily, "My dear, who are these people?"

There followed explanations on the part of the leading and only lady, and laudations of the consideration and kindness of the Duke, Bud, et al., and more or less gloom on their part, and polite thanks on the part of the dandified swain, accompanied by a proffer of cigars, and then with a glance, a superior and supercilious glance, at Cliff and Larry, particularly at Cliff, whom he evidently sized up as a mechanic or other type of inferior mortal, he proffered Larry a two dollar bill, told him to split it with "the other fellow," climbed into the runabout, alongside of the brunette whose alluring smiles now appeared quite roguish, grasped the wheel and with a graceful, farewell flourish of his left hand, whisked the enchantress away, — while the others gazed after them blankly and open-mouthed, and Cliff, flushed, grew white and flushed again. Then a series

of explosive comments, and more grilling for Cliff, on whom they proceeded to take it all out, as they too rolled on. Cliff wasn't exactly having a good time thus far.

At Villacorde's, where they alighted at the height of the dinner rush, things fairly hummed. Conversation buzzed, dishes clattered, the ebony-hued waiters perspired, the band jazzed, and Madame, serene and placid in the midst of bedlam, greeted the party with a gracious, if studied, smile of welcome that enfolded them all as impartially and completely as a burst of sunshine, — though be it confessed that the big mulatto Major Domo who led them to their table, looked at Cliff askance and certainly a bit contemptuously, if not suspiciously, in spite of the fact that the latter had managed to spruce up somewhat, before entering.

They seated themselves, ordered their favorite cocktails, and complacently absorbed the congenial and familiar atmosphere.

"Same old crowd!" commented Buck, "Hall-room boys and heiresses, perfidious husbands and their 'stenogs.,' young bloods and old bucks, swell chicks and old hens. All the fifty-seven varieties of Janes and Johns."

"Pipe the pippins with the two old bucks over in the corner!" observed the Duke. "How do they man-

age to get them? Snowy hair and bald domes sure have the call over athletic youth and symmetry. Well, I suppose my luck will change when I'm old and decrepit!" he concluded.

"Cheer up!" laughed the Shrimp, "maybe your bank roll will fatten as your hair thins out, and then you'll be pestered with clusters of them. Here comes the fodder! Pitch in! I'm for the eats!"

And they fell to, as the first course of the famous Villacorde shore dinner was set before them.

Between courses and over their cordials, they indulged in much persiflage and humorous comment at the expense of the other diners, and they ogled the pretty girls and engaged in surreptitious flirtation.

But the tables were presently turned on them most unexpectedly.

The jazz band, wending its way among the diners, came upon them.

The leader spotted them and made for their table with a broad grin. Stag parties were his meat. He grouped his dusky troubadours about them, and with much flashing of ivories and characteristic negro antics they strummed their ukeleles and burst into the song: "Gee! Don't I wish I had a girl like the other fellows have!" to the great delight of all the other guests as evinced by their vociferous applause.

And then, noting Cliff's bewhiskered chin, the leader and arch villain placed himself directly in front of him and sang the famous "Vagabond" song, while Cliff flushed and blushed, and his hand involuntarily sought his chin, in a futile effort to conceal the luxuriant crop that adorned it.

"Serves me right for allowing you hounds to drag me down to the shore like this, without even giving me a chance to get shaved," muttered Cliff, "if I ever—"

"Aw, can the growl!" interrupted the Duke. "You're worse than a skirt. All fussed up because your nose isn't powdered. Come on fellows let's pull away from here. Cliff's sore on this ranch. Let's roll up the line."

III.

Larry pulled up and away they rolled, through the balmy summer night, through the Long Island hamlets and countryside making frequent stops at the numerous hostelries that nestled along the road-side, imbibing further liquid cheer at each stop, till their merriment grew into boisterousness, and they burst into song, rending and scandalizing the serene night with snatches of maudlin melodies, in which Bud's rumbling bass tempered the Shrimp's crescendo tenor, while the others brayed in unison, if not in harmony.

"Ping! Pff — f!" Larry brought the car to a stop.

"Left front shoe, d — n the luck!" swore Cliff who had hopped out.

"'Sall right! No hurry! You'n Larry change it. 'Nother two bucks! I'll stake you!" nagged the Shrimp.

Before Cliff could reply another car rolled up from behind and stopped.

"Pull over! Pull over! Want the whole road?" bawled the individual at the wheel with arrogant insolence.

Cliff glanced at the car, — a snappy runabout, — then at its occupants.

His eyes narrowed and gleamed wickedly.

"Why, hello!" Cliff greeted the driver. "This is certainly a pleasure. Delighted to see you again!"

"You are mistaken. I don't know you. Let us pass!" rejoined he of the spats and dainty mustachios nervously, as the ravishing little brunette clung to him apprehensively.

"Oh, yes you do!" retorted Cliff. "We gave you a lift earlier in the evening and here's where you reciprocate. Hey, Larry! Block his rear wheels with some rocks from that wall, so he can't back away. 'Atta boy!"

The dandy threatened and the little brunette pleaded tearfully, but Cliff was adamant.

"Cut the palaver and get busy!" he commanded, brusquely. "Sorry, Miss, but your friend needs a little lesson. Climb out, or I'll yank you out! We changed your shoe and you gave us the laugh. Now you change ours. That's fair enough! If you're decent about it, Larry will give you a hand; if you don't, I'll take it out of your hide!"

"Oh Reggie, don't resist the brute! He looks murderous!" wailed the brunette.

"But I paid you for changing my shoe!" protested Reggie, weakly. "I say, wasn't it quite enough? Here's five dollars, my good fellow. Now do be reasonable! I really cawn't —"

"G'rr!" growled Cliff, throwing off his coat, "you can that chatter and get busy! Get a wiggle on or by God I'll —"

The little brunette burst into tears. Cliff paused.

The affrighted dandy had already hopped down and proceeded to wiggle. With Larry's help he changed the shoe, thoroughly besmudging himself in the process, the while Cliff and the bunch alternated between poking gibes at him and convulsing the now reassured and evidently contrite little brunette.

"And here's something for your trouble, old dear!"

was Cliff's parting shot as he tossed the now rather disreputable looking and much abashed dandy a two dollar bill, before they rolled gleefully on their way.

IV.

Towards midnight they pulled up at the Hermitage and alighted there for a little bite and whatever diversion the place might afford.

The Shrimp was by this time much the worse for wear. He clambered uncertainly out of the car, stumbled up the steps and lurched into the foyer, his eyes out of focus and staring wildly. The others followed none too steadily, Cliff bringing up the rear and looking more disreputable than ever, for as the result of helping Larry to change another blown shoe, he had added a liberal accumulation of grease stains and road-dirt to his mortar-stained clothes. His beard, too, seemed a full eighth of an inch longer and correspondingly scrubbier. Moreover, he had lost his straw hat, and wore in its stead a wrinkled, greasy old cap that Larry had extracted from the tool-box.

The head-waiter regarded them with evident disfavor and appeared much relieved when they headed for the cafe instead of the dining room. But Joe, the general factotum behind the cozy little bar, welcomed them cordially, for, outside the summer season, he

worked behind the bar of a leading Broadway hotel and he knew "the bunch."

With the exception of two very inebriated young bloods, still in their early twenties, who clutched the bar and incoherently avowed their undying friendship for each other, their alma mater, and what not, — the newcomers were the only occupants of the cafe.

Presently, after they had consumed several high-balls, Joe, winking mysteriously, set before them five champagne glasses, which he proceeded to fill from two pint bottles of Pommery.

"Who started that fool stunt?" protested Bud, while the rest looked at each other blankly.

"Sh! It's all right. Lick 'em up!" whispered Joe, leaning towards them and grinning broadly. "Them two young souses have been ordering pints about as fast as I can open 'em up. I've got six more stowed under the bar. They're so 'pifflicated' they can't see, and they're rotten with coin. More money than brains! So I'm not feeding 'em any more wine, 'n just kidding 'em along. When they holler for another pint, I open one, make a bluff at pouring it with my left mitt, while with my trusty right I reach under the bar and grab a bottle of sparkling apple juice, what's charged and full o' bubbles, 'n looks like wine. I gently switch the two an' feeds 'em the apple juice. You get

the wine, which is all opened and got to be poured anyhow; they get the soft stuff, which is better fer those infants, an' I get the satisfaction of —"

"You get the satisfaction of grabbing this for a starter, you old pirate!" laughed Bud, slipping him a dollar bill. Turning to his friends, he inquired — "Well, fellows, what do you say? It's poured out for us and Joe insists that it must be 'licked up.' Pretty soft for us, but kind of rough on those two young innocents. But Joe's right. They're better off without it. So let's drink their health and wish them good luck! Here's to them! How!"

The novelty and humor of the situation imparted additional zest and flavor to the wine, and they drained glass after glass, for, as the two inebriated young bloods observed that the newcomers were likewise drinking wine, they ordered more pints to maintain their prestige until, finally, a friend appeared to summon them back to their party and they reeled out.

The Shrimp was now all but out. "Where'sh the boss — sh?" he inquired of Joe, thickly. "Where'sh ol' Gus — sh? Want t' shee — 'm. Where'sh Gus — sh?"

"Upstairs," replied Joe. "He'll be down any minute. Little game upstairs."

"Wanna shee'm," mumbled the Shrimp, "where'sh game?"

"Top floor, better wait till he comes down," answered Joe.

"How'sh I get up there?" persisted the Shrimp.

"Take the elevator," replied Joe, smiling complacently at his own wit, inasmuch as the three story building boasted no such contrivance.

"Where'sh elevator? Ou'side 'n the hall?" sputtered the Shrimp.

Joe nodded and the Shrimp reeled out into the foyer, where he paused, swaying uncertainly, and squinting his left eye to get his bearings. Then, spotting the immense fireplace, which he evidently mistook for the open door of the elevator, he lurched towards and directly into it, and stumbling over some half consumed logs, — relics of the last chill March night — sprawled into the ashes and passed out, with one arm under his face, and the other fondly wrapped about one of the capsized andirons.

There they eventually discovered him, snoring peacefully, and hauled him out, besmeared with ashes and carried him out to the car, still dead to the world, and tucked him away in the rear seat, with Larry to watch over him.

"Now for some eats, to sop up the wine, before we roll back to the big burg," suggested Bud. The others acquiesced and they filed into the dining room.

The head waiter, hostile from the moment of their arrival, conducted them loftily to the farthest and least conspicuous table, — one set in an alcove — where they were quite secluded and would not offend the sensibilities of the few late guests who still lingered over cordials and nightcaps. Silently he handed them a menu, and surlily, with never a smile, he took Bud's order for a double sirloin, smothered with "violets," and, after noting the rest of their order without a comment or suggestion, he withdrew — all dignity.

"Amiable chap," commented Skeets. "Wonder what ails the d—n crab!"

"D—n crab! D—n crab! Ho! Ho! D—n crab!" echoed the proprietress' parrot, which shared the alcove with them, blinking its eyes sagely.

"Right you are, Polly," laughed Skeets, and arising from his seat, he approached the cage and in modulated tones confided his further opinion of the head water, to the receptive and loquacious parrot.

"Sap-head! Blanketty blank, blank sap-head!' shrieked Polly most profanely, responding volubly and ecstatically to Skeets' prompting, to the delight of the other revellers, the disgust of the head waiter, and the dismay of the scandalized proprietress, who left the table at which she was sitting with some guests, rushed up and extinguished Polly's profanity by throwing a

dark cloth over her cage. Then with a contemptuous glance at the entire party, she flounced back indignantly to her guests.

"Guess we're about as popular and welcome as the smallpox!" observed the Duke, after they had recovered their equanimity.

"Well, here come the eats. Drink up, fellows! Here's to our beloved and departed comrade, the Shrimp!"

Cliff said little or nothing. He ate sullenly, conscious of his disreputable appearance.

While the others drank and made merry, he fished out the stub of a soft pencil, and moodily soothed his low spirits by indulging his artistic temperament, covering the white tablecloth with caricatures.

His art studies were rudely terminated by the hostile head waiter, who, catching a glimpse of the decorated tablecloth as he passed by, stopped short, and ordered Cliff to desist.

"Say!" he remonstrated, "where do you think you are? If you spoil any more linen you'll have to pay for it!" And, as Cliff glared at him speechless, he added, "And if you don't like it, get out! This is no spaghetti joint for frowsy, long whiskered artists! Get me?" and he withdrew before Cliff could find words to resent this new indignity.

Thunder clouds were surely gathering on the horizon.

Skeets, meanwhile, had surreptitiously removed the cloth from Polly's cage, and was endeavoring to coax her into a chat by the repetition of a choice line of epithets and profanity, descriptive of the place in general and the head waiter in particular.

But Polly, who evidently regarded Skeets as the cause of her disgrace, sulked, cocked her eye knowingly, and sidled away to the far corner of the cage, refusing to succumb to the blandishments of this masculine flatterer.

And then, as Skeets moved around the cage and thrust his fingers between the bars, with a peace offering in the shape of a lump of sugar, Polly swiftly and vengefully sank her beak into his forefinger, right to the bone, and hung on for dear life, while Skeets danced and howled and swore more powerful and profuse oaths than Polly could ever have mastered.

In the midst of the excitement that followed, Cliff, with rare presence of mind, and true to his training as a member of the volunteer fire department in his home town, seized a syphon of vichy from the table, and let Polly have the contents straight between the eyes, sousing her completely, till — stunned, drenched and half-drowned, — she relaxed her grip on Skeets' finger,

and flopped about the cage in a rage, dismally shrieking — "Poor Pol, pretty Pol! D—n your soul! Poor Pol!"

Then pandemonium. The proprietress gathered up her skirts and flew to the rescue. She swooped down on Cliff, pummeled his back and shoulders and clawed his face, still further marring his classic beauty, as the head waiter and the other waiters rushed up and into the fracas.

The battle surged to and fro, through the dining room and out into the foyer, with honors even. Skeets, in the meantime, had managed to slip out and arouse Larry, and returned to the fray with the latter just as Cliff had the extreme satisfaction of landing a powerful and well directed right hand wallop, plumb on the head waiter's chin, which sent him toppling — for the count — right into the identical fireplace and ashes, in which the Shrimp had snored tranquilly earlier in the night.

As Skeets and Larry rushed up, the belligerent waiters, seeing their leader sprawled out, hors-de-combat, in the fireplace, backed away and retreated to the dining room, whereupon our victorious battlers retired to their car and rolled away, back to the big city, where they arrived at daybreak, battered and sore, but exultant.

So they called it a night and dispersed to their

various homes, — all but Cliff. He lived in a suburban town, and was confronted with an hour's wait before a train would take him home for a bath, shave, general sprucing up and return to self-respect.

V.

He strolled into Bryant Park and sat down on a bench, with his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands. Other benches were occupied by a collection of hoboes who had been there all night and were still sleeping, in a variety of uncomfortable attitudes. Ragged and filthy as they all looked, not one of these hoboes had anything on Cliff, in the way of frowsy and disreputable appearance.

The policeman who presently made the rounds and awoke these derelicts by the simple process of delivering a sharp clip with his night-stick, on the worn-out soles of their shoes, paused a moment to survey Cliff, whom he evidently considered a most undesirable acquisition to the disreputable fold — but passed on without comment, merely pausing to glance back and bestow another suspicious and searching look to fix him in his memory.

Then, as the sun began to climb over the surrounding house-tops, and the birds twittered and foraged their breakfast, the particular gaunt and ragged 'bo who

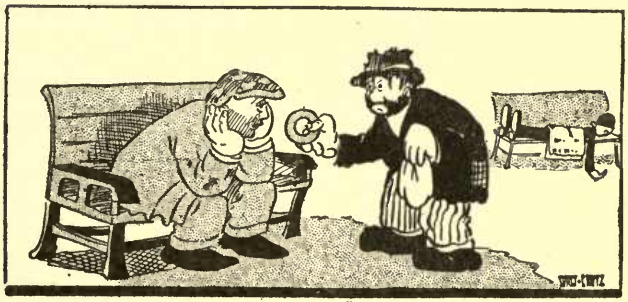
occupied the bench directly across the path from Cliff, came to life, stretched, gave himself a shake or two and ran his fingers through his hair and whiskers. His morning toilet thus completed, he sat up and regarded Cliff furtively for some time, and finally, evidently satisfied with his survey, unbuttoned his shirt, reached under it, and from somewhere between the region of his arm-pit and his abdomen, he pulled out a greasy paper bag and extracted from it a sickly looking cruller which he hesitatingly and generously offered Cliff, with the remark: "Have a bite, pard! I got two more!"

Poor Cliff! The ragged 'bo actually felt sorry for him! Annoyed and yet amused, Cliff arose, waved aside the cruller, dug a half-dollar out of his jeans, tossed it to the astounded hobo, and more disgusted with himself than ever he sauntered over to a bench on the other side of the park only to be ordered to "Move on and keep moving" by the vigilant and hostile bluecoat, who had observed his shift of anchorage with increased suspicion.

"H—l!" muttered Cliff, "Guess I'm a pretty tough looking citizen for a gentleman and a scholar. A stubbly chin and a little grime and — bang! — goes gentility, into the discard! What we are, we are, but it's what we appear to be that gets us a kick or a smile in this big metropolis of buncombe and camouflage."

Four hours later, Cliff, metamorphosed and immaculate, was accorded marked courtesy as the representative of his firm, at a conference held in one of the most luxurious offices in the financial district.

"Such is life!" he soliloquized . . . "and New York . . . !"



WESTERN UNION NO. 2074

The tale of how a stormy night and a Wall Street leak culminated in "the Widdy O'Kane's mirricle."

Western Union No. 2074.

I.

BUSINESS in "Corrigan's" was dull for the time being. The intermission jam had dispersed itself and returned to the various theatres.

Outside, a driving sleet that blinded pedestrians, and malevolent March gusts that swooped down, whisking off hats and wrecking umbrellas, kept the few regulars that still patronized big Joe's bar, from making the rounds and visiting other haunts.

Wheeler blew in, stamping his feet and flicking the sleet from his slouch hat.

"Hello, Tip!" the Duke greeted him. "Fine night to murder a Chinaman, eh! We'd about given you up. What'll you have?"

"Something hot with a good kick in it," grinned Tip. "Make it a hot scotch. Wow, but it's tough out! Some storm!"

They adjourned to their favorite table and proceeded

to while away the evening with their customary banter.

"Something up, outside!" announced Tip presently, making for the door.

"Couple of drunks, probably," opined Buck, as they vaguely discerned through the frosted plate glass, a group clustered in front of the cafe.

A moment later Tip returned, bearing in his arms a frail looking, unconscious messenger boy, pale as a sheet and wet to the skin.

He deposited him tenderly on the leather settee in the corner.

"Kid's all in, Joe!" announced Tip, as he undid the boy's shoe laces; "Pull off his coat and vest, and take off his collar and tie, Buck," he commanded, as he proceeded to slap the youngster's hands and vigorously rub his feet to restore circulation.

"I'll fix him up some hot beef broth," volunteered big Joe. "The kid looks starved and chilled to death."

As he came out of his faint and opened his eyes, the boy looked around bewildered. He half rose, but sank back again weakly.

"Lie still!" commanded Tip. "You're all right. Here, get that into you!" proffering him the beef broth that Joe handed over.

"Lem'me up," begged the youngster after finishing the broth with eager relish. "Got another message to d'liver. Gee! I'm way late! Lem'me up, please, and thank you. Got to deliver message."

"Hang your message! Forget it. You're all in. We'll see that it's delivered. Let's have it!" insisted Tip, forcing the youngster back again.

"Got to d'liver it myself. Lem'me go, please! I'm all right!" And the youngster struggled to his feet in spite of Tip, laced his shoes, and slipped into his coat.

Still pale and weak, and trembling with a severe chill, but bent on delivering his message without further delay, he reached for his cap, wrenched away from the hands that sought to detain him and made for the street.

Tip bounded up, intercepted him at the door and hauled him back.

"You're a plucky little beggar, — a good, game kid!" chided Tip, "but you don't go out into that storm till it lets up a bit and you're dried out and rested up."

"Got to d'liver my message! Lem'me go, mister, please! I'll get fired!" pleaded the youngster through his chattering teeth.

"Nothing doing, and you won't get fired either, I'll

see that you don't. Let me have your message," insisted Tip.

No. 2074 reluctantly surrendered his message book to Tip.

"What's your name, Kiddo, and where do you live?" queried the latter.

"Michael O'Kane, sir. No. — East 67th Street," replied No. 2074.

Tip noted down his name and address. "I'm going to write the company a letter advising them what a plucky and faithful employee they have in the youngster and we'll all sign it. What do you say?" announced Tip.

"Sure," chorused the bunch, "make it good and strong and give the kid a good boost."

"All right. Get me some writing paper, Joe, and then 'phone for another messenger."

"Can't get a messenger boy inside of an hour," announced big Joe, returning from the 'phone presently. "Boys all out and delayed by the storm," he added.

"Well, we've got to get it delivered," declared Tip. "Let's have a look at that book. Where does the telegram go to?"

"Union League Club," vouchsafed No. 2074, "I'm all right now, please."

"Why, that's only half a dozen blocks away. I'll deliver it myself," announced Tip, reaching for his coat.

"Hold on, Tip!" remonstrated Buck. "You resemble a messenger boy about as much as you do a chorus doll! Let the Shrimp deliver it."

"Meaning I resemble either, or both?" queried the Shrimp, resentfully.

"Nonsense!" laughed Buck, "but you *are* slight and boyish looking, and can get away with it! How about you?"

"Sure, I'm game!" agreed the Shrimp. "Might pick up a quarter, too! Never can tell!"

Whereupon they clapped No. 2074's messenger cap on the Shrimp, bundled him into an old coat belonging to the bootblack, turned up his coat collar to conceal his silk shirt and scarf, and surveyed him with much glee, declaring unanimously and hilariously that he looked like "a typical young Mercury, and a particularly fresh one at that!"

"On your way, now, Swifty, and hurry back!" laughed Tip, while No. 2074 gazed on bewildered and with much misgiving.

"Gim'me a ciggy!" mimicked the Shrimp, "and I'm off. Au revoir!" to the disgust of Micky, whose vocabulary was innocent of all "parlyvoo" and whose

Western Union ethics were scandalized by such lingo coming from under his own cap.

II.

For the next half hour Micky led the life of Reilly. He was fed up on broth and toast, fussed over, and forced to accept a two dollar note that the Duke thrust into his fist.

Another quarter of an hour elapsed and Micky was beginning to entertain misgivings about the return of "dat udder swell wid me lid an' book," when the Shrimp re-appeared, all wet and aglow, divested himself of his make-up and sipped the hot toddy that big Joe placed before him, while the others sat back expectantly.

"Well!" inquired Buck, "did you get the quarter?"

"Nope, but I copped a buck!" rejoined the Shrimp complacently, flashing a new dollar bill, which he thereupon bestowed on the bewildered Micky, whose eyes shone in wide open amazement.

"A dollar tip, eh! What for?" again queried Buck, while the Shrimp continued to sip his toddy in aggravating silence.

"Come, shoot us the story! What happened?" demanded Tip.

"Oh, nothing much," vouchsafed the Shrimp, as he drained his goblet.

"I made the Union League and blew up to the desk. The clerk took the telegram and picked up the 'phone. 'Telegram for you, sir,' he said. Then, turning to me, he continued, 'They want the messenger to take it up. May want to send an answer. Room 403, fourth floor front.'

"So up I go to 403. Five gentlemen sitting around a table, covered with papers. Box of cigars, high-balls, siphons and all that. Swell bunch in evening clothes. Looked like big bugs. Old buck, bald and red-faced, but very distinguished looking, opened the telegram and read it to the rest.

" 'That clinches the deal,' he says. 'Turner has the proxies and everything is settled. Won't be announced until Friday morning. That gives us all day tomorrow to work in.' Then he turned to a quiet-looking slim chap who was poring over their dope sheets, and says, 'Well, Art, it's up to you now! You'll have to go some tomorrow. You'll have the time of your life squeezing the shorts. Step on her, boy! Tear the throttle wide open! Nothing to it now but to run her up and get out near the top. We're good for at least twenty, and possibly thirty points, or I miss my guess!' ''

"And then they all fell to palavering and made a lot of calculations, and talked in figures that made my head

swim. Millions! Talk of a big pool that the slim chap was to operate. I thought at first that they were planning to build a luxurious swimming pool at some swell resort, till I got next to their talk, and tumbled to the fact that it was a big stock deal they had framed and were ready to put over. They paid no attention to me whatever, they were so steamed up over it all.

"Finally they decided not to send an answer by wire, but to call up some party in Detroit on the long distance 'phone instead. So the 'big squeeze' hands me a dollar bill, because they had kept me waiting for nothing and sent me on my way. That's all! Here's your book, Micky, all signed up and everything!"

"That's all! What's all?" echoed Tip, his eyes ablaze and his features tense with excitement. "What are they going to shoot? What — what did they say they'd shoot up twenty or thirty points?"

"Search me," replied the Shrimp, "it was all over my head."

"But didn't they mention the name of the stock?" persisted Tip. "What stock is the pool going to run up, man? Gee, what a chance to get aboard for a killing! What stock are they going to ride?"

"Didn't get it," replied the Shrimp. "Stock market don't interest me. Too rich for my blood. Dollar limit poker is my top speed."

"Well, what were they talking about, you poor simp? Steel, oils, railroads or what?" demanded Tip, keenly disappointed.

"None of them. It was automobiles. Several makes. Some kind of amalgamation, with an exchange of stock, two for one, or one for two, or three, or something!" replied the Shrimp triumphantly.

"And a long distance 'phone to Detroit tonight," mused Tip. "Who was the big bug, I wonder? Say, let me see that message book. He signed for the telegram, didn't he? Can't make out his scrawl. Looks like Curto, no — Carto, — Carter — that's it! L. M. Carter. Sure enough! Dollars to doughnuts he's phoning Griggs, President of the Eclipse Motor Co., at Detroit. I've got it! The big Universal Motor merger! Rumored some time ago, but never confirmed, — in fact officially denied at the time. Going to put it over, now, on the Q. T. Oh, boy! What a chance to clean up, tomorrow!"

Tip, as you can readily perceive, was an ardent member of the tape-bucking fraternity, and one who had encountered about the average degree of success in his speculations — that is to say, his endeavors to outguess the manipulators had been quite disastrous and his bank roll had been correspondingly depleted.

"Boys!" declared Tip, "Tomorrow I'll shoot the

works on Universal Motors, sink or swim, and if I clean up and get back what the market owes me, 'good-bye and fare-thee-well for ever' to Wall Street. They'll never hook me again! And that goes!"

"For a while," commented the Shrimp dryly.

"Yes, the lambs always come back to the fold, to be shorn again eventually," added Cliff.

"Greatest sucker's game on the list," muttered Buck. "Got the shell game backed off the boards."

"Right," acquiesced the Duke, "they got me too, Buck."

Whereupon there ensued an animated discussion on the evils of speculating and its hazards, with the usual recital of big clean-ups, of shoe-strings run into fortunes.

"Chance of a life time!" declared Tip. "Red-hot information right off the griddle. Let's all get aboard for a little, anyhow. We'd never forgive ourselves for being asleep at the switch, after Universal Motors has had its big spurt. Now here's my dope. We're none of us big leaguers, but we can club together and take a little flyer, anyhow.

"There are five of us. Let's buy five hundred shares, a hundred shares apiece, on a ten-point margin. I'm going to buy more on my own account. We'll buy, say, two hundred shares right at the opening of the market, and then another hundred shares on each half

point up or down, according to how the market goes. We'll put a two-point 'stop-loss' order on each purchase and let her ride. The pool will, of course, take all the stock offered, accumulating it for the rise, in advance of the public's scramble for it when the merger is announced, — even if our dope goes all wrong, we can't lose more than a couple of hundred dollars apiece, plus commissions, and we stand to clean up big. What do you say?"

And they said — "Yes." What bunch of real sports ever knowingly would pass up a chance to cop on real inside dope?

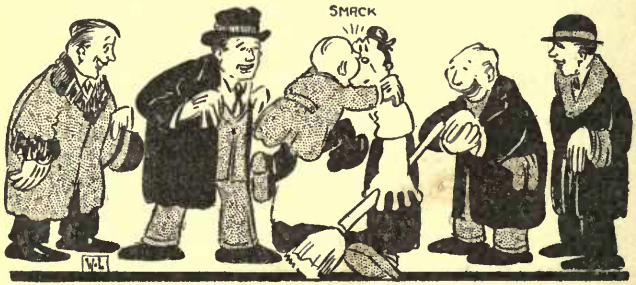
III.

And therein lay the explanation of the "Widdy O'Kane's Mirricle," which the Widdy with characteristic Celtic animation, recounted to the other ladies of her "tiniment," a few days later, as follows:

"Shure, an' late last night," she asserted, "bid time it were, an' me all alone, an' Mickey still out wid thim Casey byes, — the Divil fly away wid thim — whin wan o' thim tackchees rolled up to the tiniment, which Mrs. Murphy seen wid her own eyes, an' up to me flat marches five illigant gintlement, full o' licker an' divilment, an' says wan to me, — the big tall wan, wid the dimint pin, — says he to me, 'Are you Mrs. O'Kane?'

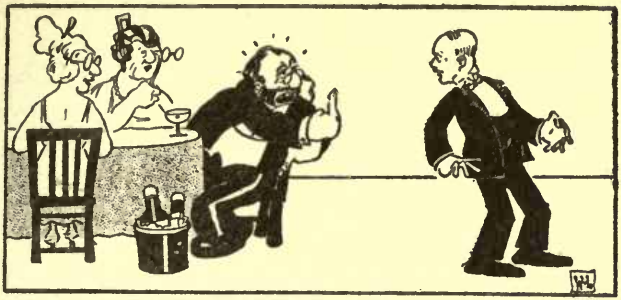
an' I says 'I am that.' 'The mither o' Mickey O'Kane, the missinger bye?' he asks, an' I says, 'The very same.' "

"Wid that a runt of a doode, which dey called the imp, which he was, up's on' his toes an' trows his arms 'round me neck an' shmacks me right shquare on me mouth, an' be all the saints, before I got over me surprise, they all does that very same, an' whin I grabs the broom to whack thim all over their drunken heads, an' clear thim out, the swellest wan, — the wan they called the Juke, — grabs the broom out o' me hand, sticks five bran' new wan hundred dollar bills in me fist an' says it's for the bist missinger bye in Noo York an' his rale Irish mother, which I am, glory be to the Saints. An' thin they runs off laffin, an' me sthruck dumm like a ijiot, an' niver a 'thank ye' or a blessin' could I give them for their money an' their impidence."



VERY GOOD, EDDIE!

In which Finkel makes a "little mistake" and Eddie acquires a fine hang-over and a new job.



Very Good, Eddie!

I.

EDDIE, a bit late, but characteristically unperturbed, gave his tie a final pat, carefully stroked down the sparse hairs that stood between him and a bald pate, slipped into his dinner coat, surveyed himself deliberately and critically in his mirror, and complacently lighted a cigarette.

"And another little drink won't do any harm" he hummed, his waiting compatriots in mind, as he sauntered over to the 'phone and ordered a taxi.

From all of which you may rightly infer that neither lateness nor any other trifle could ruffle Eddie.

Alighting at Martin's, he checked his coat, hat and stick, and with his head stiffly erect, his sphinx-like physiognomy as inexpressive as his expanse of white shirt front, he meandered dignifiedly among the tables, seeking his friends.

The hum and clatter that pervaded the well-filled dining-room failed to drown a particularly domineering and rasping voice. As Eddie turned resentfully towards its source, he was surprised to find the loud individual looking directly at him and beckoning him excitedly.

The voice and the gesticulation emanated from a portly, flushed and evidently irritated gentleman, of a decidedly Hebraic cast of countenance, characteristic of a common metropolitan type of opulence and ill-breeding.

As Eddie surveyed him, the excited gestures of the flamboyant gentleman became more aggravated. He crooked his forefinger at Eddie, beckoning him over insistently. Somewhat curious, and dominated by the other's insistence, Eddie, in spite of his instinctive dislike, sauntered over. The florid guest seized him by the sleeve, maintained his grip and fairly shouted: —

"Say, what's the matter? Don't we get no service? This is out-ra-gee-ous! Rotten service! You know me? No! I'm Mr. Finkel. Finkel, of Goldberg and Finkel. Get busy! Open that wine what that fool waiter leaves here and then runs off. Maybe he thinks we want to carry it home with us in that pail. Such service! You head waiters shouldn't hire such stupids, Stick around and give us a little attention — I'm a

reggelar feller and this is a reggelar party. Now get busy!"

"Sir," said Eddie quietly and without a flush or change of expression.

"Get busy!" continued Finkel — "Open up that wine. Look, he stands like a dummy! Such service! Get a move on!"

"Yes, Sir," said Eddie quietly, picking up a napkin from the adjoining table and reaching for the bottle of champagne. Wrapping the napkin about it in orthodox fashion and extracting the cork with skill that would have done credit to any head waiter, he calmly inquired — "Shall I pour it, Sir?"

"Sure, pour it!" growled Finkel. "I should pour it myself, maybe! Such service!"

"Yes, Sir," said Eddie demurely, and throwing the napkin over his arm, he poured the first installment of bubbles into Finkel's glass, quietly made the round of the table, and after carefully filling each glass, placed the bottle in front of Finkel. Bowing dignifiedly, he quietly asked, "Anything else, Sir?" and receiving only a grunt in reply, and at the same time discerning his own party only a few tables away, gaping at him in open-mouthed amazement, he bowed again and withdrew.

Finkel's friends observed with considerable surprise

the head waiter who had just served them, seat himself familiarly at another table. The burst of hilarious laughter that greeted Eddie's recital caused Finkel himself to turn and look over curiously. His look of astonishment turned to bewilderment. There followed at his table a converging of heads and much animated whispering and Hebraic calisthenics. Eventually the head waiter, the genuine brand in this instance, was dispatched to Eddie's table, and as duly accredited envoy, delivered this message to Eddie.

"The gentleman at the other table is quite sorry, sir! He wishes to send his apologies. He says he made a little mistake, sir."

"A little mistake!" echoed Eddie — "Oh, well! Let it go at that. Tell him to forget it. But say, you might add that a real 'regular feller' as he declared himself to be, might realize that the drinks are on himself. And he wouldn't be making another 'little mistake' either," he concluded, somewhat malevolently.

Which message, or the substance thereof, the head-waiter evidently imparted to Finkel, for there followed another converging of heads and another animated conclave. In due time a head waiter deposited a little pailful alongside of Eddie with Finkel's compliments.

Whereupon Eddie, entirely mollified, presently returned the compliment. All of which furnished a

good start for a very hilarious and extremely moist bubble-fest with the ultimate result that towards dawn, his taxi and the milk-wagon both made simultaneous delivery at Eddie's abode.

II.

While Eddie and his companions were consuming Finkel's and subsequent quarts, the latter ambled over to greet old Carleton, a power in the financial world.

Carleton had evidently observed Finkel's head-waiter fiasco, for he was looking over at Finkel and his party, apparently quite amused.

"What kind of a cheap burlesque stunt did that ignoramus pull on you?" inquired Carleton after acknowledging Finkel's greeting.

"That ignor-nor-mus!" stammered Finkel. "Say, he ain't no fool. That's a smart feller. He stuck me for a quart!" And Finkel recounted the episode to old Carleton, to the latter's keen delectation.

"Yes, sir!" That's a smart feller!" concluded Finkel.

"Smart feller nothing!" growled Carleton. "He's a clerk in our bond department and I guess he's a pretty dissolute character. I'll have him investigated."

"A clerk!" ejaculated Finkel incredulously. "A clerk! Such a smart feller! Say, he should be a

salesman, and I guess I know a good salesman when I see one. That's a smart feller! He could sell anything! Phonographs, he could sell even to deaf-mutes, — and stocks and securities, — say, I bet he could sell like hot-cakes to the schlemils he schmooses around with. Send him around and I'll give him some bisness, That's a smart feller! He stuck me fair."

"Nonsense," rejoined old Carleton, "I'll see that one of our regular bond salesmen calls on you."

"Nix on those wind-bags!" protested Finkel. "I got time to talk only to smart people, not noosances!"

III.

Later in the morning when Eddie, afflicted with both a fine young hang-over and a pronounced grouch, eventually put in a belated appearance at the office and listlessly delved into the stack of bonds and other securities that had accumulated on his desk, Chubby pussy-footed alongside and in an awed whisper greeted him thusly:

"Gee, Mr. Reynolds, the boss wants you to come right to his office. He's asked for you three times, and he looks madder'n thunder!"

"Here's where I get mine and it's coming to me too!" grunted Eddie. "Damn Martin's, and his wine and that accursed Finkel that started it all! Well,

here's where I beard the old lion in his den!" he muttered, as he adjusted his tie, squared back his shoulders, and marched into the much dreaded sanctum sanctorum of old Carleton, human icicle and president of the Trust Company.

The latter swung 'round in his chair, and regarded Eddie sternly. His bullet head appeared harder, his firm jaw squarer than ever, and his cold, penetrating eyes pierced Eddie searchingly.

But, as you have already learned, Eddie was not easily disconcerted.

"You sent for me, sir," he said, quietly.

"Young man," replied old Carleton coldly and ominously, "You are quite late this morning."

"I'm sorry, sir!" replied Eddie.

"Well, I have not been informed of any tie-up on the Subway or the surface lines," proceeded old Carleton, pausing and eyeing Eddie even more coldly.

"No, sir! I'm sorry, but I overslept!" replied Eddie with characteristic brevity and candor.

"I rather expected a well concocted excuse," proceeded his inquisitor. "However, it would have availed you little for I happen to know the truth. You dined at Martin's last night."

"Yes, sir!" answered Eddie, somewhat taken aback.

"Well, young man, so did I. — Mrs. Carleton and

I, and some guests," he added, frowning severely. "Our table adjoined the one at which you cut up your capers, but a column served to screen me and to protect your blissful ignorance. You make an excellent head waiter, and open wine splendidly, — but we have no room in our accounting department for young men who dissipate and demean themselves. Nor can we entrust the handling of our securities to a young man slick enough to wheedle a bottle of wine out of that close-fisted and slippery stock-manipulator, Finkel. I will have to request you to apply your nerve and entertaining ability elsewhere.

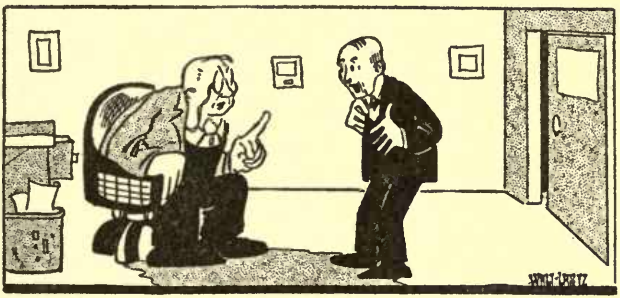
"Kindly put your affairs in shape and turn them over to Mr. Scroggs. You need not report at your desk tomorrow. Your services there are no longer required," concluded the Icicle coldly, and with a finality that brooked no further argument or discussion.

Eddie flushed, his eyes flashed and his lips half parted to voice his indignation, but closed again firmly. Without deigning a reply, he drew himself up to his full height, turned on his heel, and dignifiedly withdrew.

"One moment!" interrupted old Carleton, just as Eddie reached the door. "Just one word more, young man! ——— In the morning you will report to Mr. Burney, manager of our bond sales department, who has been instructed to install you as assistant manager.

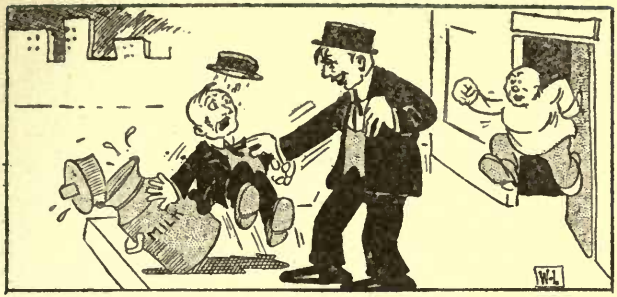
"The sales-end of the business will afford ample opportunity for the exercise of your nerve and entertaining proclivities, and the increase in salary will serve to make it unnecessary for you to assume head waiterships after hours.

"That will be all,—this morning!" old Carleton concluded, with just the trace of a twinkle in his eye.



'TWIXT TWO AND DAWN

Being the tale of two belated prowlers, a can of milk and a cluster of sandwiches and hoboes.



'Twixt Two and Dawn.

I.

ONE balmy summer night, well on towards dawn, as Buck and the Shrimp wandered aimlessly down Broadway, after assisting in "blowing out the lights" in several of their favorite haunts, they were confronted with a spectacle that caused them to pause in amazement.

There, right on Broadway, in front of an all-night lunchroom near Times Square, stood a milk-can, glistening brazenly and defiantly in the moonlight, an affront to King Alcohol and all his cohorts, a challenge, hurled in the heart of his domain.

And as they paused to survey resentfully this symbol of abstinence, it came to pass that Buck, in retaliation for a particularly ill-timed and goading jest, gave the Shrimp a playful shove that sent him sprawling against

the offending can, toppling it clatteringly into the gutter, where it gyrated about in humbled agony, while its life blood in the shape of rich, white milk, overflowed the asphalt. All of which these two worshippers of Bacchus contemplated with much amusement and satisfaction.

"Behold!" commented the Shrimp solemnly, recovering his sea-legs, and striking an oratorical attitude, with one eye cocked at the humbled can — "Behold the Great White Way, Buck! Oft' have I heard this big alley so designated, but never before have I seen it vested in its white robes of pristine purity. It strikes me —"

And just then it did, in the shape of an open-handed wallop behind the ear, delivered by the irate proprietor of the lunchroom, who, hearing the clatter, rushed out, pounced on the Shrimp, and seized him by the collar.

"Let go of him!" interposed Buck, drawing himself up threateningly to his full six foot one, "Just hold your horses a minute! It was an accident, that's all, and we'll pay you for your d—d milk."

"You bet your life you will!" replied the lunch man belligerently, as he observed an officer approaching, and a few belated prowlers and regulars gathering around.

"Say, officer, this runt kicked over my can of milk and this big guy's giving me an argument and I'm in a

fine pickle with no cream for the morning trade. Spilt my milk just for the h—l of it. Bonehead, rah! rah stuff! Lock 'em up! I'll teach 'em something they don't learn in no collidge!"

"Case of pay up or lock-up!" commented the officer brusquely.

"Get inside, you three, and all you long-necks getting ear-fulls, beat it! Move on, all of you!" commanded the blue-coat.

II.

Inside the lunchroom, which was empty save for the proprietor's handy man and chief cook and bottle washer, the officer, addressing Buck and the Shrimp, inquired: —

"Well, how about it? Which is it, pay up or a ride in the wagon?"

"We told him we'd pay him, but he wont listen and keep his temper. He——"

"All right, what's the damage?" interrupted the blue-coated Solon, turning to the proprictor and evidently not over anxious to make the arrest and appear in court in the morning.

"Well," replied the latter quieting down at the prospect of a financial settlement, "Well, the milk cost me about three dollars, but I can't serve no milk nor no

coffee and I can't get another can in time for my breakfast trade."

"Give you five dollars and call it square," replied Buck.

"Fork it over 'n I'm shut!" answered the lunchman.

Buck peeled off a five dollar note and passed it to him.

"About a third still left in the can, Boss," announced the handy man, who had been outside flushing the street to clean up the mess.

"Good enough, that'll help some!" remarked the proprietor, his good nature recovered and actually smiling now.

About that time, Buck's brain, stimulated by numerous potions and eased by a sense of relief at the amicable termination of the incident, began to function. His eyes gleamed, the corners of his mouth drew slightly upwards in a half suppressed smile, as he quietly remarked:—

"Whoa! Put on your brakes! You're speeding! Just a minute!" And addressing himself to the officer, he continued, "Now let's get this right. I've paid our friend here five dollars, two dollars more than he asked for all the milk in the can. Isn't that right?"

"Guess so," replied the representative of law and order.

"Well, then," continued Buck, "the milk belongs to me, doesn't it?"

"Guess that's right," replied the officer, somewhat reluctantly. "What 'che got up yer sleeve? Want to sell it back to him again? Don't get too smart, young feller! Y'aint out of this yet!"

"Oh, not at all!" laughed Buck. "On the contrary, I propose, with your consent, having paid a liberal price for it, to keep the milk that's left in the can for myself."

"But the can belongs to me!" protested the proprietor, "that is, it belongs to the company and I'm responsible for it. If it's your milk, it's my can, and I can't wrap it up in no paper bundle for you, to carry it away in. Anyhow——"

"All right," agreed Buck, "It's your can. What's the can worth?"

"Don't know! Never bought one in my life. What's the game?"

"Give you three dollars for the can!" suggested Buck, "What do you say?"

"It's a go, you're on!" replied the proprietor.

"Well then, that's settled, officer!" proceeded Buck. "Both the milk and the can belong to me, don't they?"

"They're yours, all right!" growled the officer, whose perplexity was shared both by the proprietor and the Shrimp.

"What's the big idea, Buck? What's coming off? I don't get you!" queried the latter.

"You'll get it later, just leave this to me," replied Buck.

"Now then," proceeded Buck, addressing the proprietor again. "I'll give you a couple of dollars if you'll let me have the use of your man here for an hour or so. Have him back before your breakfast trade comes along and pay him besides. What do you say? Here's the two spot!"

"Ye-yes!" replied the bewildered proprietor pocketing the money and pinching himself. "Sell ye the whole ranch if ye say so."

"No, not to-night," laughed Buck, "but I'll buy all the hot coffee in that urn. You can make another urnful. What will you take for it? And how much for all those sandwiches piled up back on that shelf?"

"Holy Smoke!" ejaculated the proprietor, "How do I know? I sell my coffee by the cup. Say!" turning to the officer, "What d'ye make of 'em, nuts or millionaires?" The latter shrugged his shoulders noncommitally. "Don't know who they are or what they are, but there ain't goin' to be any more monkey shines, that's what!"

"You're nutty alright!" asserted the Shrimp,

plucking Buck by the sleeve, "Let's get out of this and cut the comedy."

"Well, how much for the coffee and sandwiches?" persisted Buck, ignoring the bewildered Shrimp.

The proprietor scratched his head. "There's about one hundred cups in that urn, but she's only half full. I get five cents a cup. The sandwiches is ten cents. There's about fifty of 'em!"

"All right," continued Buck, "that's about two-fifty for the coffee and five for the sandwiches. What do you say?"

"Don't you want some pastry and cigars too?" replied the proprietor half sarcastically and half in earnest. "Why don't ye buy the whole outfit? What are ye tryin' to do? Fit up an opposition lunch-stand with me own stuff, for some of yer swell friends what's broke?"

"Not at all!" laughed Buck, "but the cigars are a good suggestion. How much for the cigars?"

"Nickel a piece. They comes twenty-five to the box 'n they're O. K. even for you and your swells," replied the proprietor belligerently.

"I'll take two boxes. That's another two-fifty. Give you ten dollars for the coffee, sandwiches and cigars if you throw in enough sugar to sweeten the coffee and lend me half a dozen cups. Is it a go?"

"Sure, anything you say!" replied the proprietor in a daze, as Buck tendered him the money.

"Now, my man," said Buck, turning to the assistant, "you're working for me for an hour or so. Here's a dollar for you as a starter. Bring in that can with the milk that's left in it, pour the coffee in that urn into the can. Sweeten it up with some sugar and wrap up the sandwiches and cigars, do you understand?"

"Sure, Boss!" replied the man-of-all-work, touching his hat and stepping out with alacrity for the milk can.

"Good, hurry up, now!" said Buck. "Everything all right and fixed up, officer?"

"Everything and everybody except the judge and the jury," replied the latter shrewdly.

"Gee whiz, that's so!" laughed Buck, slipping him a five spot as he shook his hand. "Much obliged for being so decent about it!"

"Aw, that's all right. I ain't locking up everybody. 'Specially gents what's good sports. Good night!" and the officer discreetly withdrew.

"Now, Shrimp," said Buck, "hail a taxi, while we get things fixed up. We're going away from here. Never mind! Tell you all about it in the taxi. Go out and grab one."

The taxi pulled up in a few minutes. Buck and the

Shrimp got in. The helper with the milk can and his packages settled down alongside of the chauffeur. "Bryant Park!" said Buck, and away they rolled leaving the proprietor staring after them open-mouthed.

III.

"Well, I give it up, Buck! What's the answer? If you're not plumb crazy, you'll have to show me! Never feed you any of those star cocktails again. That apple-jack is liquid T. N. T.! All that money for milk and grub and not a drop for liquor! You ought to get your head examined!" upbraided the Shrimp, as they rolled along.

"That's all right!" replied Buck. "I won twice that amount at poker last night. We were in for it. Had to pay for the milk anyhow. So why not use it? We're going to feed the poor birds in Bryant Park. It's time we did a little uplift work. All of it we've done so far is lifting up wine glasses. It'll be a good lark and ease our consciences."

And so, at four o'clock on this warm summer morning, our taxi pulled up at the curb in front of Bryant Park, and Tom of the lunchroom was instructed to quietly set up the can full of hot coffee, and the sandwiches, on a vacant bench.

"As soon as everything's ready, Tom," commanded Buck, "wake up these birds and invite them to tea, or coffee, rather."

And Tom, who had intermittently been a hobo himself, wandered among the benches, shook each hobo out of his slumbers and whispered a few magic words in his ears, whereat, out of the shadows, there presently gathered about the "collation" a shuffling, ragged, nondescript collection of "down-and-out" human flotsam and jetsam, who stood off, rubbing their bleary eyes in unbelief and amazement at this novel institution, never before encountered in any of their open air dormitories.

"Serve the gentlemen, Tom!" directed Buck, as the Shrimp returned and reported that no officer was in sight.

The coffee and the sandwiches were dispensed to the accompaniment of mumbled thanks. The more brazen ones, in the meantime, pressed about Buck and the Shrimp, and imparted to them their stereotyped hard luck stories in the hope of extracting some silver from their benefactors.

"Pass the cigars, Tom!" ordered Buck, whereat there followed a concerted and converging movement on Tom.

At this juncture, a powerful grizzly bearded 'bo pushed through, hurled the other hoboes aside, and

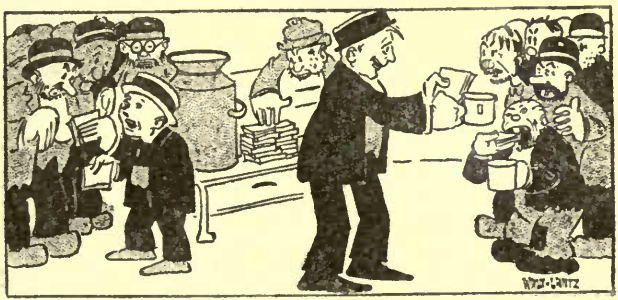
snatched both boxes of cigars away from Tom with the announcement: —

"Dese goes to me! Dey're good fer a couple o' bucks! You'se guys clean up de grub. I'll take care o' de smokes!"

A howl of protest, a torrent of oaths, a rush at the big hobo, and then a fine free-for-all, intermingled with flying fists and well-delivered kicks. Bedlam was loose, and the stillness of the night was rent by the discordant cries of battle.

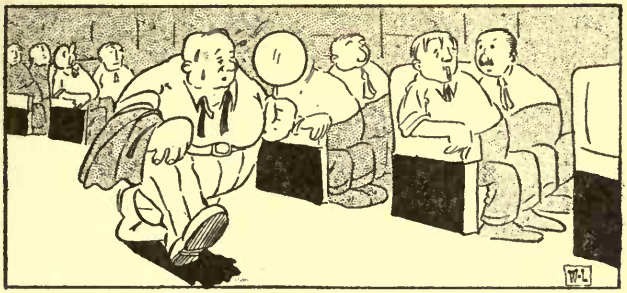
"Come on!" exclaimed Buck, grasping the Shrimp by the arm, "Some battle! No more up-lift work for me! Let's beat it before the cops get here and we get grabbed again. I'm through! Come on!"

And as the taxi whirled them away, the chauffeur added another fragment to his bizarre mosaic of New York nights.



THE STOIC TAKES THE COUNT

In which philosophy is floored by a combination of humidity, corpulency and "general cussedness."



The Stoic Takes the Count.

I.

THE end of a perfect day — of misery; the stickiest and most sultry of a record hot spell; a day of wilted collars, palm-leaf fans, rickies and fizzes; — a lurid day, and a night equally oppressive.

All of which didn't feaze Cliff's easy going disposition. He refused to swelter, or fuss, or swear, or liquor up, or gape at thermometers, or resort to the orthodox procedures commonly observed in "sizzling" weather.

In cool pongee silk pajamas and straw moccasins, he lounged away the day in his bachelor quarters. Later, he betook himself to the Athletic Club. Four fast round with Professor Dan, a mile lope around the track, some toying with the medicine ball and the pulleys, all accompanied by a profuse "sweat," left his system bone-dry. A hot shower followed by a cold one, a wallow in the tank, an alcohol rub, and Cliff,

refreshed, comfortable and almost cool, taxied to his train for dinner at the country club.

II.

In the smoking car he was fortunate enough to secure the last vacant seat, next to the door. He sprawled out comfortably, and surveyed with a smile of mixed amusement and compassion his stewing and steaming fellow-passengers, — a variegated array of shirt waists and ill-temper.

Following the fashion prevailing for the evening, he tossed his straw hat in the rack, hung up his coat, rolled up his sleeves, lit a cigarette and presented a picture of comfort and equanimity quite out of accord with the prevailing atmosphere.

The train, with the smoker half filled, was just pulling out when a gasping, puffing, snorting volcano, in the shape of some two hundred and eighty pounds of red-faced obesity, reeking perspiration and alcohol waddled in trailing his coat with one hand and brandishing his collar, tie and hat in the other. Instinctively the single occupants of the double seats, collectively expanded and broadened out, their knees and elbows further assisting to diminish the unoccupied space alongside of them.

Hippo plowed down the aisle, and not finding suffi-

cient space to stow his bulk, gave vent to a snort of irritation and turned back.

"Bet it'll be just my luck to have 'cutie' pick on me," thought Cliff, and sure enough, old Hippo spotted him, noted his cool and comfortable appearance, in marked contrast to the wilted and irritable demeanor of the others, and with a grunt of relief settled into, or rather overflowed, the vacant space alongside of Cliff, compressing him to a condensed edition of his normal self.

Cliff's temperature and temperament rose simultaneously. He resented the glances of commiseration and the exasperating smiles directed towards him. Growing more uncomfortable by the minute, he suffered the grilling with Spartan stoicism, cursing the perverseness of fate. And then, after the train had rolled a mile or so, — came an inspiration.

Quietly he reached up to the open window, compressed the patent catch, and allowed the window to slide down and close. He was conscious of old Hippo's sidelong glance of mixed wonder and resentment, but sat quietly, gazing through the closed window at the baked landscape, his best poker face to the fore.

Old Hippo emitted a couple of snorts, and glared his displeasure. Cliff reached up for his straw hat, put t on and sat down.

Hippo, taking off his glasses, bestowed on Cliff another look of irritation. Cliff sat imperturbable.

Just thirty seconds later Cliff rolled down his sleeves and buttoned his cuff links. Hippo gave a double snort and quivered perceptibly. Pulse 90. Temperature 100 plus.

And then, as the train rolled through a tunnel, Cliff, his eyes contracted and gleaming a bit wickedly, rose deliberately, reached for his coat, slipped into it, and sank quietly into his seat again.

Old Hippo gasped and turned livid. Beads of perspiration trickled down his fiery red bald pate and gathered into streamlets that traced their way into the wrinkles of his jowls and ponderous neck, and lost themselves in the nether regions.

Cliff buttoned up his coat. A minute later he turned up his collar. This was too much for Hippo. He squirmed into a posture that enabled him to face Cliff, and exploded:—

"For the love of Mike, young fellow! You're not freezing, are you?"

"Oh, no sir!" replied Cliff innocently, "I'm only a bit chilly."

"Chilly?" gasped Hippo, "Chilly? Good Lord, I'd give a hundred dollars for a chill right now! Chilly? Can you beat it? Say! You, you, you're——Phew!"

(more snorts and more streamlets) "Chilly? Well, of all the nuts! Guess I'd rather sit among a lot of gabby, powdered-up women, than with a lunatic, — Phew!"

And with a succession of choking gasps and snorts that threatened an apoplectic attack, Old Hippo rose up in all his torrid bulk, glared at Cliff with an excess of wrath that found no further expression in words, and wallowed out of the smoking car, followed by many looks of amusement, and not one of compassion or regret.

Cliff however, still imperturbable and sphinx-like lit a cigarette, rose quietly, re-deposited his hat in the rack, divested himself of his coat, rolled up his sleeves, and again opened the window.

III.

The personification of self-satisfaction, he serenely puffed his cigarette and complacently mused upon the density of ordinary, unsophisticated mortals. Whereupon Fate, ironical and inexorable Fate, dealt him a back-hand wallop.

At the very next station, a filthy and ill-smelling flounder fisherman, as corpulent and sweat-reeking as the departed Hippo himself, deposited his basketful of odoriferous fish in the rack over Cliff's head and squatted down beside him!

Cliff's temperature and choler rose again. His equanimity and linen wilted simultaneously, as he broke into perspiration and muttered profanity. Even Cliff's vaunted self-control had its limitations.

And then, as the train hit a sharp curve and swerved violently, the basket overhead was seized with a spasm, rolled out of the rack, and showered its ill-smelling, scaly and slimy assortment of flounders and tom-cods over Cliff's head and shoulders, to the accompaniment of a howl of delight from the other passengers.

"H—l!" roared Cliff, bounding up and into the aisle. "Survival of the fittest, and superiority of mind over matter, and all such truck, be d——d! I'm cured!"

THE MISOGAMIST

Wherein is chronicled how Joe's studies in juvenile psychology resulted in a complete transformation in his personal appearance, his philosophy and his marital views.

The Misogamist.

I.

THE wild strains of a Hungarian rhapsody and the animated contortions and final flourishes of the swarthy director of the Gypsy Orchestra, stilled for a moment the chatter of the diners.

Phoebe and "Kewpie," satiated with lobster salad and Biscuit Tortoni, surveyed the cosmopolitan assemblage with critical feminine interest.

The Misogamist and the Duke sipped their cafe noir, floated with brandy, and puffed at curiously twisted black cheroots, supplied by the waiter in response to the Duke's request for a couple of good smokes.

They were regaling themselves thus after having attended a seance of the Moonshine Club, the mecca of radicals and theorists, who flocked from the lower East

Side and Greenwich Village to this forum of all the "isms," — socialism, materialism, and every idealism, expounded by all manner of optimists and pessimists.

The Shrimp, after attending one of these gatherings, had expressed the opinion that this society should have been named the Squirrel Club, because it manifested such an interest in all kinds of "nuts."

To-night's discourse, "The Crucible of Matrimony," had evoked much ardent discussion.

The Misogamist, in particular, held decided views on this subject, which were not at all shared by the Duke, in consequence of which they had become involved in a quite heated post-mortem debate.

"Oh, of course, Duke! Of course!" declared the Misog., after the applause that greeted the conclusion of the rhapsody had subsided, "It stands to reason that no sane person would ever dispute the fact that marriage is an essential institution. It is the foundation of the family and the community. Of society and civilization too, for that matter. It's a necessary evil. Every fool knows that — from personal experience. I'm not arguing against marriage from a sociological standpoint, but only from an individual point of view. I'm really for it, — for others, but not for 'yours truly,' — leastwise not in this mad metropolis or in any other real burg."

II.

It was not the first time that Joe Steeples had declared himself on this subject. In fact, it was because of his frequently avowed aversion to matrimony that his cronies had dubbed him "the Misogamist." Upon consulting his dictionary, he accepted this sobriquet quite complacently, for he was of the type that nail their colors to the mast.

He did, however, make this pronouncement: A misogamist, or hater of marriage, he was — unqualifiedly and self-avowedly, — but a misogynist, or hater of women, — never!

A distinction with quite a difference, of course.

While hardly a ladies' man, — for his penchant was more for club-life and the conviviality of male companionship — Joe was nevertheless rather popular with the fair sex and enjoyed female society.

He was an excellent conversationalist and likewise a good "kidder." His fund of stories and anecdotes seemed inexhaustible, and his own hearty laugh at their conclusion was irresistible. The girls liked his dry humor and blunt wit, and overlooked his lack of elegance and gallantry, his perennial black bow-tie, and square-toed shoes. They rather liked his twinkling eyes, his firm jaw, and his masculine, but rather comely

features. In short, they regarded him as a sort of genial, likable cave-man.

Peggy O'Connell, familiarly known as "Kewpie," who conducted a fashionable millinery establishment, under the name of Mlle. Eloise, averred that he was "a dear old bear."

Phoebe Burr, a private secretary and bachelor girl, prim and intellectual, whose apartment "Kewpie" shared, agreed that Joe was rather attractive though somewhat uncouth.

If Joe was popular with the ladies he was doubly so with the men. He was, as Bud Barrows once expressed it, more than a "fifty-fifty guy," rather a "seventy-five — twenty-five" sort, who more than held up his end and was liberal to a fault.

Blessed with an oversized heart, he loved everything and everybody, from measly pups to glacial grandeur,— likewise his modicum of liquor.

Possibly you may wonder how so genial and warm-hearted an individual could hold such narrow views on the subject of matrimony. The fact remains however that Joe refused to consider women seriously. To him they were but a diversion of the moment.

III.

But to return to the controversy over the "crucible of matrimony."

"Mais, mon chère!" protested Kewpie to Joe, pouting archly, "I think you're just terrible! Men must marry and become husbands, or else who will buy my pretty creations for madame and her charming daughters?"

"There you go! That's the woman of it!" laughed the Misog. triumphantly. "Marriage to the average woman means little more than a meal ticket and a charge account. It's in the air in this extravagant, cabaret-mad community of apartment cliff-dwellers.

"No real home-life! No family ideals! Out to dine, out to the theatre, out in the motor, out to the country club! Out, always out. Shows, dinners, dances, wine, taxis and expensive finery. A week's salary blown in a night. Then home with the milk wagons to the big brick bee-hive, with the elegant, commodious entrance hall, and the stuffy, cramped apartments, with their grasping landlords, autocratic janitors, insolent domestics, distracting phonographs, chattering parrots, yipping lap-dogs, and a veritable succession of petty annoyances. No rest, no comfort; continuous bickering and continuous quarreling.

"And then, the temptations by which an up-to-date wife is beset! The Paris gowns, the wonderful millinery, the luxurious furs! And the catty references of the ladies to the mythical earnings of their spouses.

Foolish chatter about the opera, autos, gowns and a thousand extravagances.

"And poor Tom, too, has to keep up his end. Opens up wine at the club, gets hooked in a poker game, and comes home well-skished, broke and in hock for a month's salary, only to find a new batch of bills awaiting him on his dresser.

"Married life in such an atmosphere! Give me the care-free, untrammelled existence of the bachelor. It may be selfish, but it's less conducive to gray hair, baldness and nervous prostration," concluded the Misog., grinning complacently.

"Rot!" answered the Duke tersely. "That's only one phase of New York life. It depends entirely on the individuals themselves. Plenty of real home-life in this town! The people you cite are in the minority. Not all people live in stuffy apartments, and many that do are happy and maintain real homes in them."

"Of course," remarked Phoebe, with an amused smile, "We all know Joe's prejudices on the subject. Nevertheless, there is much truth in his argument. Married life in a big city *is* beset with pitfalls. However, Joe seems to quite overlook the feminine phase of the question. How about the faithful, patient, home-loving wife, who sits up nights alone, while her husband debauches and squanders his income? How

about the brutal, inconsiderate and perfidious husbands? Women do not all seek or welcome marriage. Girls who have mastered paying vocations prefer their independence; at least, many of them do. Fortunately, I'm quite able to support myself, and, realizing the extent of the gamble, I too, prefer single blessedness."

"That's right! Side with the old Misogamist, Phoebe," growled the Duke. "First thing you know we'll dub you 'the Misoga Miss.' You're a fine team, you two, and are only fooling yourselves. When Miss Right comes along, Joe, you'll fall just like the rest, only twice as hard."

"Well," retorted Joe, "Miss Right, if she exists at all, is certainly not a New York girl, — not the prevailing type at any rate. I've seen too many of my friends marry and haven't failed to observe how seldom it 'takes' in this town. And take it from me, if ever I do fall, it will be for some small town girl or simple country lass."

Kewpie laughed. "I think you're quite funny Joe! You'll marry allright, and you won't have as much to say about it as you think, either.

"Let me have your hand. I know something of palmistry. Let's see what the lines show. Come on, Joe, be a good sport."

"Well, go to it!" yielded Joe. "I'll be the goat! Do your worst!"

"I see success, — success and a lot of money. You'll be rich, very rich," proceeded Kewpie with well mimicked gravity, tracing the lines of Joe's generous palm with her well manicured index finger.

"Thanks!" grunted Joe, "I suppose I'll frisk a bank or promote a mine, or something."

"This line denotes humor, this smaller one conceit, and this one determination. However, it is crossed at the top by this line denoting weakness," continued the seeress.

"Marvellous!" commented Joe.

"Ah! There *is* a woman. A petite blonde." Kewpie feigned intense interest, then released Joe's hand and leaned back in her chair smiling grimly and triumphantly.

"Well, shoot it!" commanded Joe, "I'm game. Finish your act."

"Well, Joe," concluded Kewpie, "You're going to marry allright. But not yet, and not soon either. Not for many, many years. Not till you reach the age of senility.

"Then, when you are in your dotage, you'll marry a little doll of a chorus girl who'll lead you by the nose, wheedle you out of your money, and eventually run off with her real fair-haired boy, who'll help her spend

it. Sorry, old top, but that's what's in store for you, unless you come to your senses and win yourself a nice little wife before it's too late."

"Ho, Ho! Great!" roared the Duke.

"Ho, Ho! Trash!" growled the Misog.

"You're terrible, Peggy!" laughed Phoebe, "I'll certainly never let you read my palm."

"Well, now that that's over," announced the Misog., smiling good-naturedly, "Let's finish this red ink and call it a night. Pretty late for little girls to be out, particularly in the company of such a gay Lothario as the Duke."

Whereupon they summoned a taxi and drove the girls home, the Duke and Joe, however, stopping at the club for a "wee doch-an-doroch" with the usual result, and the consequent loss of much sleep.

IV.

The following day a bright Spring Sunday morning, Joe lay comfortably sprawled out in a hammock on the verandah of the suburban home of his widowed sister, with whom he lived, smoking his calabash and meditatling over the controversy of the night before.

"Kewpie is just a giddy moth, a perfectly nice, ikable girl, very pretty and vivacious, and all that, but not reallv intellectual or interesting," he solilo-

quized. "Phoebe, however, is a really clever and intellectual little woman, a sensible and attractive girl, with lots of poise and tact. She's got the right idea. Funny how well she and Kewpie hit it off together. They are just opposite types."

His reverie was interrupted by Bobby, his twelve year old nephew, of whom he was very fond and proud and who in turn idolized his Uncle Joe.

Bobby was all fussed up about the ball team he and his playmates had just organized — "I'm catcher an' I'm captain" he informed Joe — "An' we've got a dandy nine, an' a catcher's mask an' gloves n' everything — an' Skinny Rogers is pitcher an' can pitch a dandy curve, an' we're going to play the Maplewood Avenue nine next Saturday for a silk flag that Red Muller, who's pitcher of their team, got his father to put up for a prize."

"Well, you'll certainly have to win that game, Bobby," said the Misog. "My friend, Mr. Barlow, who lives on Maplewood Avenue, will crow over me a lot if that bunch beats your outfit."

"Dunno!" said Bobby, "They're a reg'lar team."

"What!" said the Misog. — "You're not afraid of them, Bobby, with you catching and Skinny's dandy curve — how's your infield and your outfield?"

"Oh, we've got a dandy team all right — we've got

the best players; their pitcher can't pitch a curve like Skinny can."

"Well, then you ought to beat them, oughtn't you?" queried Joe. "Dunno," replied Bobby dubiously—"we've got a better team, but they've got suits—they're a reg'lar nine."

"But you can play better ball and have a better battery, haven't you—what have the suits got to do with it?" argued the Misog.

"Sure, Uncle Joe," answered Bobby — "we've got better players, but they've got suits. They're a real nine."

"You mean to say that an inferior team that's uniformed can beat a better team that has no uniforms? How do you make that out?" objected Joe.

"Dunno," sulked Bobby, "but they can."

Joe pondered for a moment over this psychological revelation.

"Bobby," he demanded presently — "if your team had suits, regular honest to God baseball suits, could you beat the Maplewood team?"

"Sure thing, Uncle Joe!" responded Bobby enthusiastically — "We'd lick the life out o' them — Skinny's a better pitcher than Red; an' our whole team's better. I can catch better than Lefty Taylor, too, an' I can throw to second, an' he can't. Sure, we'd lick 'em, if we ever got suits."

Joe smoked for a moment in silence. Science demanded that this psychological phenomenon be verified or refuted. Besides it was up to him to maintain his nephew's prestige among his playmates.

"Ask your mother to let you ride to town with me tomorrow, Bobby. Don't let her refuse you and maybe we'll come back with suits for your nine," he suggested.

"Gee! Uncle Joe, I'll be back in a minute! Gee! Reg'lar suits, Gee!" and Bobby scurried off, wildly excited, as fast as his legs could propel him.

And on the following Saturday the Laureltons won the game, and Joe, who was among the onlookers, came away convinced that the new and natty suits had contributed more than any other factor to the victory of Bobby's team.

Every boy on the Laurelton team seemed to be spurred to play his very best by a desire to justify the favorable impression created by their appearance as they marched onto the field. Their opponents were certainly awed and somewhat disconcerted, and the umpire, — a member of the High School team — was also palpably impressed, as evidenced by a leaning in several of his decisions, in favor of this "reg'lar nine," for while the Maplewood team was also uniformed, their togs consisted of a motley assortment of varie-

gated suits, much the worse for wear, most of them handed down by big brothers who had discarded them.

Yes, unquestionably the suits had won the day, decided Joe, as he mentally reviewed the game, and he pondered deeply over this trivial yet convincing demonstration of the efficacy and value of maintaining appearances, or, in sporting parlance, of "putting up a good front."

Nor was the impression made on him by this incident merely a passing one. He began to note that the most prosperous and successful among his acquaintances certainly looked the part, and he began to wonder how much their outward appearance of prosperity had contributed to bring about the reality.

And his conclusions were gradually accompanied by an astounding metamorphosis in his own personal appearance and apparel.

Off came the square-toed shoes, to be replaced by more stylish footgear; the black bow-tie was discarded for up-to-date scarfs, set off with a neat stick-pin; tailored suits of up-to-date patterns supplanted the sombre ready-made clothes he had worn heretofore.

And one Sunday he amazed his friends by appearing at the club wearing a natty pearl gray fedora, a carnation in the lapel of his coat, and jauntily swinging a stick, — a veritable Beau Brummel, in fact.

"Pipe the regalia on the Misog.," whispered the Shrimp. "Nothing to it! There's a skirt back of it all. The old Misog. has been bitten at last!"

But when, over their high-balls, at this session of the Sunday morning Bible Class, they twitted him about his transformation and accused him of backsliding from his misogamistic tenets, he smilingly and placidly disavowed any such occurrence, without enlightening them further, leaving them, as usual, completely mystified over his idiosyncrasies.

He noted too, with keen amusement, that he was becoming the recipient of much attention and even deference, all of which seemed to justify his recent and somewhat belated recognition of the value of making a good appearance.

V.

It was shortly after this that his conclusions as to the result of that kid ball game, were even more substantially confirmed and justified.

Van Brunt, the president of his company, with whom, through long association, he was on intimate terms, invited him to luncheon. He had grown up with the company and worked assiduously and faithfully, acquiring an intimate knowledge of every department and phase of the business. Officially he was the

manager of the Credit Department, but actually he was consulted and identified more or less with the administration of all the departments.

"Joe," announced Van Brunt presently, as they lunched at their trade club, "I'm delighted to inform you that at the annual meeting of the company yesterday afternoon, you were elected not only as a director but also to the office of Vice President and General Manager. Congratulations, Mr. Vice President; we all feel that the company is equally to be congratulated."

After Joe had recovered from his first surprise and had duly expressed his thanks, Van Brunt discussed with him some of the more pertinent matters that would require his attention and administration. Presently Joe ventured to inquire as to what disposal the company would make of his predecessor.

"Oh, Boulton," replied Van Brunt, "why Boulton has tendered his resignation. He is going into another line. Wasn't exactly a success, as you no doubt are aware. He was somewhat of an experiment, rather a costly one. We should have selected you at the time we selected him but er—!"

"But what?" quietly demanded Joe.

"Well, Joe," replied Van Brunt, "at that time, while you were really far better qualified than any

other man in our organization, you, er— you, well, the fact is, you didn't measure up to appearances, — er, looked kind of clerky, — you'll pardon me, but I'm trying to justify our failure to select you in the first place, and, er — "

"I understand perfectly," answered Joe quietly, "and you were quite right in eliminating me under the circumstances."

After their return to the office, Joe, at his desk, pondered exultingly. "That purchase of those kids' ball-suits, thanks to Bobby's claims as to their potency, has turned out to be the best little investment I ever made," he soliloquized. "And take it from me," he added, "henceforth I'm an absolute believer in the value of first impressions and appearances."

VI.

Van Brunt had suggested, and in fact insisted that Joe take an extended vacation before assuming the arduous duties of his new office and so Joe decided to run down to Atlantic City on the following Saturday for a two weeks' sojourn.

It so happened that Phoebe had arranged to sail for Bermuda on that same Saturday.

As the second officer of the Prince George, the steamship on which Phoebe had booked her passage, hap-

pened to be a close friend of Joe's whom he had not seen for years, he proposed to call for her in a taxi, take her and her luggage to the ship and at the same time surprise his old friend the second officer. His own plan was to proceed immediately thereafter to Atlantic City.

On arriving at the pier they clambered up the gangplank, and Joe, after escorting Phoebe to her stateroom, wished her a pleasant journey and sought out Jack Connors, the second officer.

Connors was overjoyed to see Joe again, and at once led him to his cabin, where he produced a bottle of Scotch and a box of cigars, over which they rehearsed their college escapades and exchanged subsequent experiences, making generous inroads on the Scotch as they talked. Presently Joe, consulting his watch, announced that it was getting to be time for him to leave.

"Listen Joe," suggested Connors, "why leave at all. You're going on a vacation anyhow. Why not stay aboard? I'd be tickled to death to have you make the trip and share my stateroom. A trip to Bermuda has it on Atlantic City a thousand ways. Nothing like a sea voyage for a complete rest. It wont cost you a red cent for the trip and — "

"Nothing doing, thank you! Can't be done. I've

already bought my tickets for Atlantic City and made my reservation at the hotel," protested Joe.

"Oh, bother the transportation!" urged Connors. "I can have one of our clerks on the pier redeem it, and a telegram will cancel your hotel reservation. Your luggage is in the taxi and I can have it aboard in a jiffy. Come on! You'll enjoy the trip immensely and be better off with me in every way, than you would at Atlantic City."

"What'll my friend, Miss Burr, say?" protested Joe, wavering. "I'd better consult her. You see it might not look right — "

"Nonsense!" laughed Connors, "and besides there isn't time. We'll surprise her and make her trip all the more pleasant. I'll arrange to have her seated at my table, in place of that long faced Baptist minister that they wished on me. Never could drink comfortably in the presence of the cloth! Come along! Just got ten minutes to get your luggage aboard and send that telegram. Say Yes! 'Atta boy!" and Connors' effusiveness and his enthusiasm, aided and abetted by the seductiveness of the Scotch, carried the day.

VII.

At dinner, and well out to sea, Phoebe got the surprise of her life when Joe seated himself beside her, as

likewise did Joe and Connors, for Phoebe flashed a look of indignation and intense anger at Joe and swept from the table. Joe followed her to her stateroom, only to be upbraided roundly.

"Oh, don't try to explain," she cried, bursting into tears. "You don't understand. You're just an inconsiderate, scatterbrained fool of a man. Can't you see what a fine lot of talk and scandal you have bred?

"For you it's merely a lark. Men, and particularly bachelors are never seriously criticized. But for me it is ruination. Can't you see the folly of it? You and I on the same boat, unchaperoned! I'll never forgive you and I don't want to see anything of you on this entire trip, or ever afterward either. Oh, I'll never be able to face my friends! Oh, how could you, Joe!" and Phoebe threw herself on her bunk and burst into a fresh paroxysm of tears, whereupon Joe, thoroughly disconcerted, departed, roundly cursing himself and Connors. He sought a secluded corner of the upper deck to take counsel with himself.

"A fine 'how d'ye do' and a nice vacation, you blamed ass!" he muttered. "How'll I ever square things with Phoebe? Spoiled her whole trip, like the blooming idiot that I am!"

He cogitated deeply for a while. Finally he arose, gazed intently at the radiant, sunset-streaked horizon,

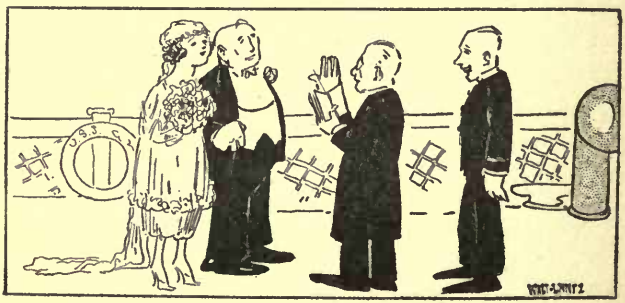
and murmured decisively: "I'll do it! It's up to me to square this mess and it's the only way. I'll put it up to her anyhow, and if she can see it, I'm game, and by God, I hope she is too! I believe in living up to appearances, and appearances certainly point that way."

And so it happened that on the next day the Duke nearly collapsed and the others stared in open-eyed wonder, when the Duke opened and read aloud the following wireless telegram: —

ON BOARD S. S. PRINCE GEORGE. GREETINGS. ON OUR HONEY-MOON. KINDEST REGARDS TO YOU AND THE BUNCH. FROM
JOE AND PHOEBE.

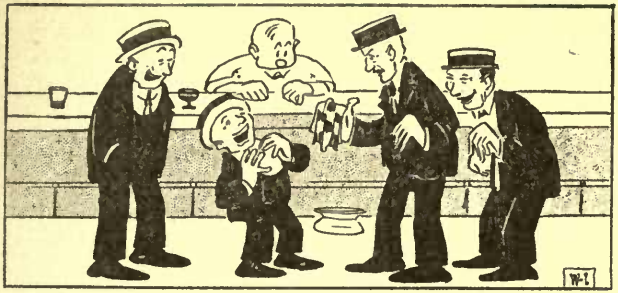
"And they both posed as marriage haters, the rank frauds!" gasped the Shrimp, "And they certainly appeared to be, too! I'll never take any stock in appearances again!"

And yet Joe believed in them implicitly, and both were right, — so there you are!



THE TALE OF THE PATCH

Setting forth how Buck and the Shrimp took their "hang-overs" out for an airing, and how Buck became possessed of the patch and his discomfiture thereat.



The Tale of the Patch.

I.

BUCK dug into his jeans to pay for the last round of drinks, fished out a roll of bills together with a rectangular, nondescript patch of cloth, gazed at the latter a moment in bewilderment, and then, with a look of disgust, dropped the patch into a cuspidor, whereat the Shrimp shrieked his delight and danced about in glee, the while the bunch gazed inquiringly.

All of which calls for further elucidation, and the recital of the episode of Buck and the patch.

Early in the day, or rather late that morning, Buck blinking somewhat resentfully at the bright sunlight, paused, as he stepped from his domicile, to inhale with evident relish, lung-fulls of the clear, invigorating morning air.

The match which he lighted on the stone coping

paused uncertainly in its ascent towards the cigar which was poised somewhat gingerly between Buck's lips. An obliging and possibly discerning zephyr caused it to flicker out. Whereupon Buck's teeth refused to clip the end of the cigar, the charred match sailed toward the gutter, and the cigar narrowly escaped the same fate; however, on second thought, it was returned to its original repository in Buck's vest pocket. "Damn," commented Buck tersely. Decidedly, he was feeling a bit rocky.

II.

A taxi pulled up at the curb and out hopped the Shrimp, spick and span, as irrepressible and loquacious as usual.

" 'Lo, Buck! Figured you'd just about be coming to life. So I grabbed this boat and rolled down. Great morning! How's the boy? I'm feeling fine as silk, — great!"

"You are, like ——, and neither am I," growled Buck. "And take it from me, you pestiferous bar-fly, I'm off all liquor and strong for fresh air — oceans of it — and the simple life and the quiet stuff, so —"

"All right!" interrupted the Shrimp, "I'm with you! Let's hop into my chariot and drive wherever Your Churlishness may command!"

"Well, where to?" asked the Shrimp, as they seated themselves in the open taxi.

"Don't care!" muttered Buck a little more amiably, "But no liquoring up, and that goes!"

"All right, let's go," laughed the Shrimp. "Steer your own course, chauffeur. Let her roll!"

By the time they reached the Concourse and were rolling north on its wide and breezy expanse, Buck had quite recuperated from the previous night's orgy. He lit his cigar, and vouchsafed an occasional reply to the Shrimp's incessant chatter.

"Let's stop at Bronx Park and look over the animals," Buck suggested presently.

Time out, — while we remind you that Buck is a big game hunter and a woodsman of some note.

"Animals!" laughed the Shrimp, "I saw them all last night, pink elephants, blue crocodiles, emerald snakes, and the whole blooming menagerie!"

"Umph" sneered Buck. "Beasts, you mean. Disreputable bipeds, rumhounds, bar leeches, human vipers and vampires, ugh! No more of that tribe for me. I referred to the noble stag, the graceful antelope, the powerful grizzly, the ——, Aw! Grin your fool head off! You prosaic product of the metropolis of sky-scrapers!"

III.

They dismissed the chauffeur at the gate, and strolled about the zoological gardens, until their perambulations brought them to the shore of a pond, where they stopped to watch a cluster of urchins who were trying unsuccessfully to hook goldfish with improvised tackle consisting of strings, bent pins and gobs of chewing gum for bait.

Their antics and shrill comments afforded Buck much amusement.

"Gee, Shrimp!" he laughed, "Those kids get more fun out of nothing than we could out of a hundred dollar bill. Makes me feel like a youngster again, just to watch them. Fills me with vim and pep."

And Buck stretched himself to his full six foot one, flexed his biceps, and inhaled a chestful of bracing ozone.

"Bet I'd ketch one if I could see 'em!" vouchsafed one little optimist, on his hands and knees, peering into the water.

"Well, have a good look, Kiddo!" laughed Buck, and reaching down, he grabbed the youngster by the slack of his loose fitting pants, — evidently paternal hand-me-downs, — and held him out at arm's length over the water.

There followed a shriek and a tremendous splash,

and a violent commotion in the heretofore placid waters, as the frightened youngster wallowed about in an endeavor to gain his feet. Buck stood stupefied, his arm still extended, clutching a patch of cloth that had erstwhile served as the seat of the affrighted youngster's knickerbockers.

The scandalized goldfish scattered in disgust; the youngster's playmates jumped about and howled a concert of glee at the unlooked for spectacle; and Buck — still stood petrified.

"Y-ye big stiff!" blubbered and sputtered the youngster, who had managed to crawl out. "I didn't do nothin' to you! Hey fellers, git a cop, git a cop! Look wot he done to me pants! Me mudder'll lick me good. Ow—wow! Git fresh wid a feller yer size, ye big stiff! Ow, I'm soakin' wet an' me pants is busted! Git a cop, fellers. Git a cop!" — and the tough little product of the East Side, in his rage, heaved a stone at Buck that almost found its mark.

"Wow!" gasped Buck, recovering from his surprise. "D——n the brat! He's worse than a screech owl — Shut up, you little fool!"

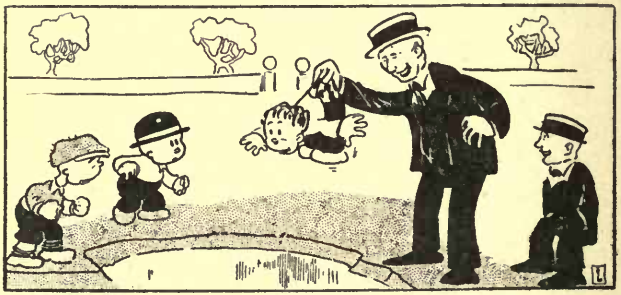
"Slip him a dollar or two, Buck," suggested the Shrimp, "and tell him to get his mother to buy him a new pair."

Buck pulled out his roll, peeled off a two dollar bill

and handed it to the militant urchin, whose howls and threats instantly subsided as he grabbed the bill.

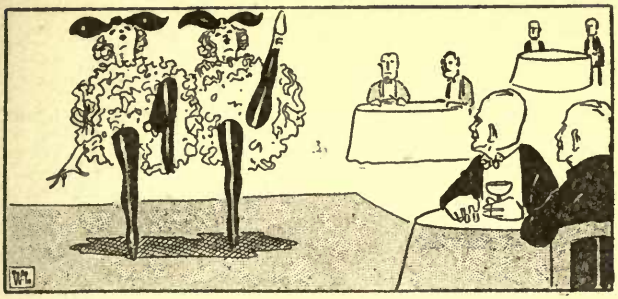
Up the path, leading from the pond, he sped, — his right hand clutching the bill, his left clapped over and futilely endeavoring to conceal that part of his anatomy heretofore covered by the patch, — while his playmates scrambled after him, emitting a series of shouts and shrieks, consisting mainly of "Addy you! Divvy, divvy up! Bonney on you Red!"

And Buck, emitting a sigh of relief and still clutching the patch, thrust it absent-mindedly into his pocket together with his money, where it reposed innocently until, as we have already related, it inopportunely came to light again.



APRIL SHOWERS!

Which is not a meteorological discourse, but a recital of Dame Fortune's fickle treatment of "The Revere Sisters."



April Showers!

I.

ELEVEN o'clock....! The kaleidoscopic electric signs seemed to flare more brilliantly. Ubiquitous taxis honked and scurried hither and thither. Stately limousines rolled through the tortuous maze. Chattering streams of humanity poured from the portals of the theatres and filtered into their favorite haunts seeking further diversion. —— For the Great White Way was blooming into mirth and revelry, —— and the night was young!

At a sequestered table in one of the flashy restaurants just off Broadway, sipping their highballs with the ennui characteristic of the regular frequenters of the roofs and cabarets, sat Tip Wheeler and Buck Barrows, languidly observing the arriving guests as they drifted in and distributed themselves at the now rapidly-filling tables.

The jazz orchestra, which, up to the present had strummed listlessly, now burst into a fanfare of riotous harmony. Nimble fingers tore at banjo and ukelele strings, leather lungs tortured cornet and saxophone, and the arch-distractor, the drummer, alternated in frantic ecstasy between snare and kettle-drums, cymbals and triangles, cowbells and a variety of other clanking, noisy contrivances.

And then, from the wings, there burst forth onto the stage, two gyrating, whirling dancers, two scantily-clad, ravishing, fluffy-haired dolls, who circled about the stage and each other, with airy grace, in a maze of fantastic convolutions and acrobatic contortions.

Conversation lulled. Vivacious sirens and their faultlessly tailored Romeos craned their necks in rapturous admiration. Lavishly gowned dowagers stared haughtily while their corpulent escorts adjusted their glasses and peered at the performers in discreetly silent approval. The act terminated amid thunderous applause.

"Peaches! Some little kickers! Wonder if we couldn't meet them! The little blonde smiled right at me," raved a sallow fashion-plate of the lounge-lizard variety.

"I'll stake the head-waiter to slip them a note if

you're game. They sure are two swell Janes!" rejoined his equally enthusiastic companion.

Tip glared at them contemptuously.

"Snappy act," commented Buck tersely.

He picked up the menu, ran his finger down the program printed on its reverse side and for Tip's edification announced —

"THE REVERE SISTERS"

Terpsichorean Sylphs.

"Uh, huh!" drawled Tip, "Know all about 'em! Friends of mine. That's why I steered you here. We're going to meet them and take them for a little ride. So drink up! They'll be ready and waiting for us in a few minutes. What d'ye say?"

"Ah!" rejoined Buck, "I surmised that you'd dig up a couple of skirts when you hired that limousine. So that's why you're spreading yourself. Well, they look good to me! What's the program?"

"Nothing but a nice little ride and a few drinks and dances and all that sort of thing," answered Tip. "A late supper at one of the road-houses and then we'll shoot them home again. Perfectly nice, lovable girls mind you! So don't make any cracks!"

"Don't quite get you!" replied Buck skeptically.

"Well, you will, after you meet them and know them," proceeded Tip. "This, by way of diversion,

is going to be a respectable little party. You confided to me at the club, that you were tired of lapping up liquor; weary of sitting around and listening to ribald stories and witticisms; surfeited with all its sameness, cheap glamor and shallowness. You felt guilty about it. Remarked that the time and money thus wasted could be put to better use, — making others happy who might need a little cheer and comfort. I felt the same way. So after dinner I phoned and arranged this little party. That's why you and I are going to play the Good Samaritans for a one-night stand — at any rate. Well, I guess the girls are ready and waiting for us. Come along!"

II.

So they checked out. That is to say, they surrendered their hat-checks and likewise "two bits" each to the alluring coat-room girls who had relieved them of their straw-hats on their entrance into the gilded maws of this rapacious establishment. Having redeemed their headgear they were passed on to the gaudily-liveried door-man, who with unctuous servility ushered them into their car and then as soon as his yearning palm closed on his duly forthcoming but "unearned increment," promptly switched his fawning smile to his next prospective victims.

Tip directed the chauffeur to stop just around the corner.

"There they are," he remarked, hopping out.

He entered a Subway kiosk and held a brief conversation with two shadowy figures, vaguely discernible through the translucent glass sides. Presently they emerged and were ushered into the limousine.

Buck figuratively rubbed his eyes and pinched himself. In the dim light shed by the sparsely illuminated Subway entrance, he discerned two slender girls, modestly attired in plain dark serge dresses, topped with tawdry neck-pieces of "cat pelt" ermine, their hair severely gathered under simple little toque hats.

"The Revere sisters!" gasped Buck inaudibly, "Impossible!" Tip was stringing him!

Introductions followed. "Buck," announced Tip, "I'd like you to meet my very good friends, Mrs. White and Miss White — her daughter. Ladies, permit me to make you acquainted with my old side-kick Mr. Barrows, — Buck for short. Flo and Winnie are 'good fellows,' Buck. So let's cut the frills right at the start. Flo and Winnie, Buck and Tip — no social prefixes. And now, I guess, we're all set!"

"Oh Tipsy, old dear!" laughed Flo melodiously. "You are so delightfully informal. Tip always makes one feel so at ease, Mr. — er — Buck!" she amended

as Tip shook his finger at her with an admonishing smile.

Buck glanced at little Winnie. She was gazing at Tip with a look of positive worship. "Oh yes," drawled Buck, "Tip's a good sort and a good pal. Not quite one hundred percent of course but sort of a demi-God I'll admit, particularly ——"

"Cut that stuff and let's talk sense," interposed Tip. "Now Flo, tell me how you've been. How's the world using you? How are things going? Stage-door Johnnies pestering you as much as usual? Never mind old Buck! He's a good listener and never talks much unless he's liquored up. He'll be talking your ears off after we make a few stops. Don't mind old Buck, he's a brick."

Gradually, as they reclined comfortably in the luxuriously cushioned seats of the limousine, Tip drew out of Flo a recital of her trials and tribulations. Buck, who sat facing them, regarded them quizzically and listened in silent sympathy while demure little Winnie nestled contentedly in the encircling arm of her self-styled and to her, wonderful "big brother."

Things were not going well with the Revere Sisters. Flo unfolded a rather pitiful tale — a tale of the heartlessness and greed of brutal managers and grasping booking agents, and of the wiles and snares that en-

compassed them. Their act was on the wane. Already they were performing in mediocre establishments. Soon they would have to "show" in third-rate houses at half their present salary. And after that — what? Cheap vaudeville and coarse burlesque, road companies, small towns, and a gypsy life, with all its hardships and precariousness. This they faced, — unless they could devise and stage a new and novel act. That, however, meant an expensive outlay for new costumes and stage trappings, and hours upon hours of weary rehearsal that they could not afford to devote the time to, for they just had to keep going in order to live and make both ends meet.

And then too, there was the monthly sum that Flo sent her destitute mother in England. Moreover, there was her shiftless, drunken husband, whom Flo had forsaken many years ago, taking Winnie with her and whose persistent mulcting still further depleted their scant income. In addition to their financial troubles it transpired that they were frequently subjected to indignities by designing and often coarse admirers, — acquaintances forced on them by servile managers or obsequious proprietors who were importuned for introductions, and who could not be offended.

Buck sat and listened in silent indignation. He studied Flo and Winnie sympathetically. His thoughts

reverted to the scene he had witnessed at the cabaret only an hour ago. The dashing, scintillating, winsome Revere sisters! Whirling and gyrating, happy madcap dancers! There they sat. A lovable, simply attired pretty mother and her charming modest daughter. Winnie, eighteen, and Flo — well, perhaps close to forty, — mother and daughter, gambolling through a sister act, maintaining a pathetic farce on and off the stage, exposed to all the wiles and indignities that beset the cabaret-performer's existence.

Mother and daughter! Revelling between and after performances with favored guests, subjected to advances, liberties, — insults. Eager to doff their wonderful stage raiment for their modest street clothes, to return weary and disheartened to their shabby lodgings.

"But it will all come out all right, some day and some how!" concluded Flo, smiling gamely through her glistening tears. "Just a little April shower, that will soon be dissipated by the glorious sun! I'm not losing my grip, and Winnie is a dear and such a comfort. Doesn't care for finery and luxuries and does all the real housekeeping, while I fuss around or rest up." — And Flo beamed on Winnie with maternal affection and pride.

"But I've been terribly selfish and disagreeable,

Tipsy," continued Flo, "unburdening my troubles on you and — Buck! After all, this is a good old world, and tonight I'm perfectly happy. Winnie and I are always happy when Tip takes us out," she confided to Buck. "He's our Prince Charming, and the only real friend — "

"Bosh!" interrupted Tip, "I'd much rather be out with my two little sisters and old Buck than with the rum-hounds I generally trail with. We're getting close to the Pell Tree Inn. Let's stop there and look 'em over. Buck's dying for a little liquor, I know. How about you, old top? Time for a little smile, wot? And a couple of fox-trots with the girls! What d'ye say?"

"Well," drawled Buck, "I might be seduced! I'm agreeable!"

"Seduced! — Agreeable!" laughed Tip, "why you old toper, your tongue's hanging out, and I'm spitting cotton myself! A couple of nice, cool gin-daisies ought to hit us about right, eh!"

"Fine!" assented Buck enthusiastically. "Occasionally your old think-tank still emits flashes of brilliancy."

The Pell Tree Inn, at which they presently pulled up, was at its zenith of mirth and revelry. Tip was in his element and the life of the party. A newspaper "column" editor, he fairly bristled with humorous

sallies and repartee. Buck too, as Tip had predicted, relaxed after imbibing his second "daisy." Flo, her troubles forgotten, was radiant, and convulsed them with the recital of the ridiculous advances of an eccentric and much-infatuated old fellow-lodger in their rooming-house. Demure little Winnie blossomed into a vivacious and positively bewitching enchantress. Their table resounded with laughter and merriment.

Buck was now thoroughly adopted into the tribe. He fox-trotted and one-stepped with Flo and Winnie alternately, and vied with Tip in his endeavors to provide pleasure and happiness for the "Revere Sisters."

Eventually they wound up at the Hunter's Island Inn. Here they regaled the girls with broiled lobsters and crisp celery preceeded by hors d'oeuvres in the form of delectable, dainty little caviare sandwiches, all of which they washed down with rare old Scotch ale.

Over their demi-tasses they were content to quietly survey their fellow-guests who at this late hour still feasted, drank and danced away the cares and worries of yesterday and of the morrow.

Presently Nature asserted herself. Flo, stifling a yawn, called attention to the late hour and suggested that they call it a night. Tired, but contented and happy, they rolled back to the city.

"Tip, old Scout, you're an ace!" vouchsafed Buck, after they had safely seen the Revere sisters home. "I enjoyed our little party immensely. Can't we repeat it? Flo and Winnie are just — well, —— most lovable. It did my heart good to see them happy and forgetting their troubles. Why can't I give them a little party next week?"

"You can, old top! I'm sure they'd be delighted!" rejoined Tip linking his arm into Buck's affectionately.

III.

From that night on, it became a pleasant duty with them to bring cheer to the Revere Sisters at frequent intervals.

But things went badly with their proteges notwithstanding.

On one of their visits they found Flo disconsolate and in tears. Pressed for an explanation, she shook her head and remained silent. Presently gathering herself, she forced a game little smile and dismissed the subject.

"Only another little April shower!" she sighed, "and now, let's be happy, for when you two old dears call, the skies always clear and the clouds roll away. Don't they, Winnie?" and she smiled at them bravely, while Winnie nodded her assent.

Flo's occasional fits of despondency worried her two staunch friends. Their proffer of financial assistance, she had gratefully but firmly refused, with a finality that brooked no repetition, and there remained nothing for them to offer but entertainment and cheering distraction.

On the occasion of a subsequent visit, however, Flo was radiant.

"Just think, Tip! You'll hardly believe it, Buck!" she exulted, "Winnie is to be featured in a big Broadway production. We're made! We're to break up our act after we finish our bookings. I'm through with the stage, except that I'll of course accompany Winnie and look after her and her wardrobe."

And then she related how they had become acquainted with a big producer, who, after seeing their act, had introduced himself, and had ever since been paying marked attention to Winnie.

"He is working on a big musical comedy, to be produced in the fall," continued Flo. "It's to be a hummer, — a big hit. Winnie is to be starred in a sylvan dance act, as Diana the Goddess of the Chase, supported by six other girls. Isn't it wonderful?" she concluded.

Tip and Buck were equally delighted. They heartily congratulated the future star and her proud and

happy mother. All four made merry and celebrated until well into the morning.

Shortly thereafter, Tip was offered and accepted a lucrative assignment on a San Francisco newspaper and left for the coast. Buck too was called away on an extended business tour that entailed calls on practically all of the branch-offices and sales-agencies of his company. They both completely lost track of the Revere Sisters.

IV.

A year later, Buck, marooned for the night in a small Middle-West town, drifted to the unpretentious Opera House, — the only diversion the town afforded.

As he sat in his fifty cent orchestra seat, between a coal miner and steel puddler, and gazed about him at the tawdry audience, — men in black sateen shirts and celluloid collars, and women garbed in cheap print-cloth dresses, their hair covered with gaudy silk handkerchiefs, — he could not but contrast this motley assemblage with the fashionable audiences that patronized the elegant theatres of the metropolis.

"The whole blamed house don't represent over four or five hundred dollars," he muttered.

Presently the orchestra, — a piano, violin, cornet and drummer, — perpetrated the overture, and the

well-worn curtain rose on a cheap, coarse burlesque show of the stereotyped variety.

Buck watched the show listlessly. His predominating feeling was one of disgust, incited in particular by the low comedian and "star" performer, whose coarse witticisms and crude antics elicited loud guffaws and applause from his equally low-cast audience.

And then, hand in hand, with the cheaply and flashily-attired dandy of the show, there minced onto the stage the smirking, powdered and painted heroine and "Queen of the Burlesque."

Buck straightened up, craned forward and rubbed his eyes in unbelief.

"Winnie! Winnie White! Beyond the shadow of a doubt!" he gasped as he sank back in his seat.

He sat through the show in a daze. Conflicting emotions surged through his brain. Towards the close of the last act, he summoned an usher and slipping him a dollar bill and a note hastily scrawled on one of his cards, he instructed him to deliver it to Miss Vivian Le Claire, the name under which Winnie was billed on the program.

A little later, seated with Winnie among the polyglot patrons of the smelly and greasy restaurant that adjoined the Opera House, he contemplated her in silence, while Winnie chatted volubly and almost fever-

ishly, monopolizing the conversation in a quite transparent endeavor to ward off interrogation on his part.

"Only a year, — and what a change!" soliloquized Buck. "Demure, modest, quiet little Winnie, chattering insistently, — quite boldly and even brazenly," he thought. Her voice had harshened, and her eyes, — well, certainly they were no longer demure. The firm expression of her mouth, the new lines that had crept into her features, and her entire demeanor and bearing, yes, she had changed, — and somehow Buck experienced a feeling of mingled disappointment, pity and resentment. Her plumed turban, her bobbed hair, her very attire, all appeared to Buck to be in keeping with her cheap theatrical life and tawdry affiliation.

"Winnie!" he presently blurted out, "Are you really quite happy and contented?"

"Why — er, yes, — of course!....I have to be!" she answered with a touch of her old naivete, wincing under the directness and bluntness of his question.

Buck was not deceived by her assumed cheerfulness and her pluck. However, he considerately shifted the subject. "And Flo," he inquired, "how is she, and what has become of her?"

"Oh, Flo!" replied Winnie, "why mother is O. K. We broke up our act as you know. Things didn't pan out, and she was terribly disappointed. She got sore

on our act and the stage in general and the whole blooming business. Even before we quit she was all played out and had to stall through our act. Stiff in the joints and all that! Mother's no chicken you know, and it was tough work, even for me!" vouchsafed Winnie.

"What is she doing? Where is she?" persisted Buck.

"Well, she's —— she's a waitress in a Child's Restaurant in New York" replied Winnie reluctantly. "But she likes it and is doing fine," she added hastily. "Much easier work, and with the tips she gets she's making out pretty good. She stands fine with the manager, too. He says she's the best and speediest waitress he's got. Pretty light on her feet — for a waitress!" added Winnie smiling pathetically. "I get a letter from her every week. She's all right!"

"And the big producer who was to star you, Winnie, — what of him?" queried Buck. "Didn't his show materialize or pan out?"

"Oh, he's around," replied Winnie evasively. "Buck, do you remember that funny old fellow in our boarding-house, that always tagged after mother, well he — "

"But what about the big producer, Winnie?" insisted Buck. "He was paying all kinds of attention to you. What became of him? Didn't he — ?"

"I married him!" interrupted Winnie desperately.

Buck gazed at her in astonishment. "What's the rest of the story? Come, tell your old friend all about it. Did the hound desert you? Or did you leave him?"

"Not yet!" replied Winnie shrugging her shoulders callously. "We're living together, after a fashion. You saw him tonight in the show. The comedian!" she concluded, lowering her eyes and toying with her spoon.

"What, that low brow!" gasped Buck involuntarily, staring at Winnie in amazement and disbelief.

"Yes," sighed Winnie resignedly. "But he looked different somehow when we first met. Seemed like a fine gentleman and talked so convincingly of his big show and all his wonderful plans. Well, the longer we live the more we learn! Not that Joe's such a bad sort" she continued, "he treats me all right, — as well as he can, — when he's sober!"

Poor Winnie! Buck's heart went out to her in warmest sympathy.

"And the big production — what became of it?" he presently inquired again.

"That was it — the show you saw tonight!" replied Winnie drearily, — you see Joe is a bit optimistic and talks pretty big! — Some show Buck, isn't it?" she concluded with a trace of her old archness.

"Damn it all!" ejaculated Buck, "you positively can't go on like this, Winnie! How long are you going to keep up this — this farce?"

"Oh, I don't know," rejoined Winnie listlessly, "you see I'm hooked! Some day, when Joe's beastly drunk and brutal, — I'll run away — back to Flo — to mother! You see it's in our blood! Flo ran away from my father — you know! Don't you think I'd make a pretty Child's waitress? Maybe as good as Flo!" She laughed bravely in simulated gaiety.

Buck did not respond. He could sense no humor in the situation. For some time he pondered silently. "Winnie, there must be some way out of this mess!" he asserted, "non-support, incompatibility, brutality,— or something! In the meantime, can I help you in any way? Do — do you need money?"

"No, Buck! You're a dear, but you can't do a thing. I'm all right. But you might look up Flo and — and take her out — for — old time's sake!" And with that Winnie broke down and sobbed convulsively.

"Don't Winnie! Don't — Brace up! Everything will come out all right!" comforted Buck.

"Yes——!" smiled Winnie, drying her tears, "perhaps! Don't mind me, Buck. As Flo would say —

only a little April shower! The clouds will soon roll away! I'm all right. And now — let's go!"

Shortly after Buck's return to New York he wrote Winnie a cheering letter. It came back unopened and marked "Not Found."

V.

The months rolled by, — the gorgeous autumn, the dreary winter and the gladsome Spring. It was summer —— a balmy night in June.

Buck, seated in a taxi, all spruced up and immaculate, lolled back in blissful revery — rapturously in love! And tonight he was on his way to take the plunge, — to propose.

As he rolled towards her home, dreaming, planning, and fondling the little plush case that contained the ring, he was roused from his meditations by the stopping of his taxi — stalled for a moment in the Broadway traffic jam.

The strains of a familiar hymn, the blare of a cornet and a trombone, and a thumping bass-drum, vied with the traffic noises. A Salvation Army group, right alongside of his stalled taxi, was fervently engaged in its nightly effort to arouse religious ardor and to gather converts.

Buck, impatient and annoyed, peered out through the open taxi window. His gaze swept from the melan-

choly brother who soulfully thumped the big bass-drum to the equally doleful cornetist, and to the two ragged converts, kneeling in the gutter — saved! Suddenly he gasped in astonishment, his eyes riveted in an incredulous stare.....!

Sister Florence and Sister Winifred, their arms encircling each other's waists, jangled their tambourines, and sang with rapturous fervor, their countenances under their quaint Salvation Army bonnets, suffused with beatific smiles of peace and contentment.

His taxi disentangled itself and lurched ahead.

"Hell's Bells and Jumping Jupiter!" ejaculated Buck, "Some knock-out! Life sure is a queer riddle! Anyhow they certainly looked happy and contented. Perhaps the April showers and sombre clouds have really passed for good at last!"

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